VENICE

JEWISH COMMUNITIES SERIES

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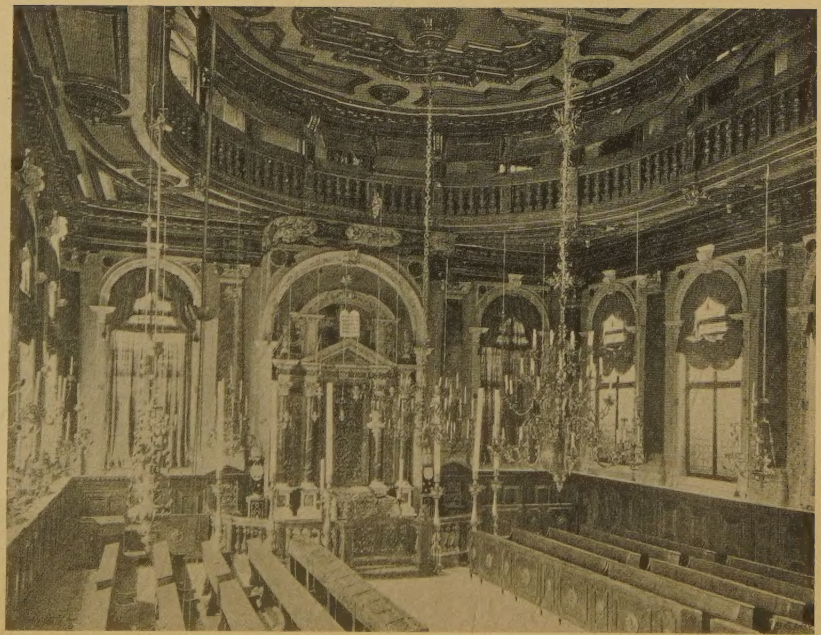

Synagogue in Venice. Built in the 16th century

JEWISH COMMUNITIES SERIES

VENICE

BY

CECIL ROTH

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'Ours is a trophy which will not decay
With the Rialto . . . . . .'

Childe Harold,
IV. iv.

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PREFACE

The present volume necessarily differs in one important respect from the majority of the others published or projected in this series. The latter deal with communities which have already claimed an historian —in some cases, more than one. Venice, however, has not hitherto had this fortune, whether good or bad. It had formed the subject of numerous, but not too numerous, articles; while the fascinating personality of Leone da Modena is the center of a whole literature. Nevertheless, there are certain periods of Venetian Jewish history which so far as serious inquiry goes have hitherto been an absolute blank. Accordingly, the present volume has had to combine the two perfectly different functions of original research and the exposition of the results in a readable form. A very large number of sources, both printed and manuscript (the most important of which will be found indicated in the Bibliography), have been used; but it has obviously been impossible to give authority for every fact mentioned in the text, even though a large proportion of them are new. The reader is respectfully requested to believe that for each one, however incredible, the author has had evidence which appears to him reliable.

The actual importance of the community of Venice was not at any time very considerable. The total number of its components never exceeded five thousand. In date, it is comparatively modern; and its heyday was confined to a period of less than

two centuries. However, during that brief space of time, it attracted some of the most vivid personalities in the whole range of Jewish history. At the same time, it developed a social life of extraordinary warmth and interest, which it is possible to reconstruct in unusual detail. It is these aspects, therefore, which have been stressed in the present volume. The Ghetto scene was as characteristic and as fascinating as any other aspect of Venetian life in the period of the decline of the *Serenissima*; and it is to be hoped that this volume will do something to redeem it from the neglect from which it has hitherto suffered at the hands of historians of the baroque period in Italy.

It is my pleasant duty to set on record my deep acknowledgments to Ing. Guido Sullam of Venice for the exquisite plan of the Venetian Ghetto which he had the kindness to prepare for this volume.

London, April, 1930.

CHAPTER I

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE JEWS IN VENICE

CENTURY after century, the blue waters of the Mediterranean had rippled against that long line of sand banks which protects the Italian coast, between the mouths of the Adige and the Piave, from the full fury of the ocean. It was a desolate spot. The soil was unsuited for cultivation; and the waters were disturbed only by the furrows ploughed by an occasional fishing boat, or by a coasting craft on its way between the flourishing ports which already existed north and south. Nothing betrayed the possibility that here, on the clump of tiny islands under the lee of the sand bank, there was to arise a fairy city which would count among the seven wonders of the world, and would one day hold half the Levant in fee.

Meanwhile, far away to the East, the same Mediterranean waters were beating upon the dunes lining that narrow strip of fertile land, now known as Palestine, which divided the Arabian desert from the sea. This was no desolate country. It was the heir to ancient cultures. It was familiar to the Egyptian and the Babylonian, as they marched and countermarched across it. And, in the terraced hills, made fertile by their industry, there lived a unique people which had miraculously discovered, to

the amused contempt of their neighbors, the idea of God.

Long centuries passed. In the East, Egyptians and Babylonians gave way to Persians and to Greeks. The people which lived in the Palestinian hills was repeatedly conquered, but refused to succumb whether to blandishments or to force. In Italy, the mysterious Etruscan culture which had previously prevailed had yielded insinuatingly before a newer and more vigorous people. Blindly following their Imperial destiny, the Romans had blundered on from conquest to conquest. Thus, ultimately, they succeeded to the overlordship of that strange Syrian people which, perversely and illogically, continued to refuse recognition to strange gods even when the latter had proved their might by blessing their followers with victory. The stubbornness of the Jews cost them dear. They were repeatedly conquered and overthrown, in a succession of disastrous wars and revolts. Every country of the world knew them as slaves, and marveled at their folly in holding to their foolish provincial ideas in opposition to the whole tendency of human experience and progress. In Italy—the heart of the Empire—they were especially familiar, their curious separatist fancies serving as the butt of every aspirant poet. Meanwhile, the waves continued to pound against the ever increasing sand banks at the northeastern corner of the peninsula—still desolate, still unpopulated. Only, in the neighborhood, there sprang up great towns—Aquilaea on the seacoast to the north,

Ravenna to the south, Padua a little way inland, and many others.

All of these places, like every city of importance in the whole of the Roman Empire, knew something of the Jews. They had, perhaps, arrived in the first instance as slaves. But their proud and independent nature, coupled with stubborn attachment to their traditional practices, rendered them bad servants; and their racial solidarity, aided by mutual benevolence, generally enabled them to gain freedom. The pioneers were followed by other exiles who came as merchants or as artisans. Latin inscriptions testify to the presence of Jews at this early period throughout this part of Italy—at Brescia, at Concordia, at Pola, and elsewhere; and it may be assumed that they were not absent from any of the greater cities of the region. In Aquilaea, the parent city of Venice, a synagogue is said to have existed in Roman times. At Ravenna, at one time the capital of the Western Empire, more is known of the early history of the Jewish community. A synagogue was to be found here as early as the reign of the Barbarian ruler Odoacer, who was buried near it after his assassination (493). In 519, an attack was made upon the Jews by the populace, who had imbibed fanaticism with Christianity, and all their places of worship were burned down. The community—already, as it seems, properly constituted—appealed to king Theodoric, the Ostrogoth, for justice. He immediately ordered the city to have the ruined buildings reconstructed at its own expense, threatening any recalcitrant with the lash.

By this time, the little cluster of islands to the north was no longer quite desolate. The barbarian invasions of the fifth century, led by Attila and his hordes, had spread terror amongst the inhabitants of the mainland of Venetia—as this province was already called, after the pagan tribes which had lived in it from time immemorial. Many of them, fleeing from the sack of the towns, had sought refuge in the little cluster of islands under the lee of the great sand banks, where their enemy could not follow. Here they built their houses, accessible only by water, and they evolved their own semi-maritime life. The further barbarian incursions of the following years drove more refugees from the mainland to join them. The inhabitants of the various islands gradually came to feel a certain sense of cohesion, Latins as they were, as against the mixed horde of barbarians who had driven them from their ancestral homes. In the lack of all superior authority, they had come to develop a democratic organization of their own under ten Tribunes. Ultimately, at the head of these they placed an elective leader whom they called the *Dux*, or Doge: the first being Paolo Anafesto, elected in 697. The first seat of government for the free islanders was Heraclea, whence it was removed to Malamocco. Ultimately, in 813, it was transferred to Rialto: the center of a compact little group of islands, intersected by canals, which provided unusual opportunities for expansion. Here, a populous city quickly arose out of the sea; receiving the name of Venezia (Venice) after the tribe to which the ancestors of many of its inhabitants had

belonged and the Roman province in which the spot had previously been included.

The hardy fisher folk turned naturally to the carriage of goods by sea. From carriers, they became traders. Mercantile privileges were showered upon them by the Popes at Rome and the Emperors at Constantinople, eager for the support of the vigorous young republic. No longer content with the barren islands of the lagoons, the Venetians extended their territory on the neighboring Italian mainland and down the Dalmatian coast. The wealth of east and west streamed to the populous group of islands centered about Rialto. Upon them, with the aid of this garnered treasure, there arose stately churches and palaces. A fairy city came into being, with the sea for streets and with domes and turrets innumerable reflected in the waters. The hardy democratic republic became transformed into a wealthy aristocracy, and the fishing village into the capital of a mighty empire. The old Roman Empire had been long in travail; but at last, out of its agony there was born Venice—the city of the Doges and the Patriarchs, of Titian and Tintoretto and Giambellini, of the Aldi and of Casanova and of Goldoni—the city of the first Ghetto.

The founders of the Venetian republic, simple-minded fisher folk that they were, can hardly have included in their number any Jew. They would have shrunk, indeed, at his presence; and any infidel who might have lived in their midst on the mainland was doubtless left without hesitation to his fate. The subsequent wars had led to a decline of urban

life throughout Italy, with inevitable reactions upon the Jewish communities. Nevertheless, some of those in the northeast of the country must have won through from classical to medieval times. There is a curious legend which reports the existence of Jews in the little city of Cividale even before the Christian era. This was solemnly commemorated by the community, somewhat unscientifically, in 1568. As to the fantasy of the tale, there can be no question; but it testifies nevertheless to the high antiquity of the Jewish settlement in the region. About 930, according to one account, a certain Rabbi Solomon ben Tanhum ben Zadok engaged in a religious disputation somewhere in the Romagna near Ravenna with a zealous Christian priest, against whom he gained the day. At about the same time, the zealous bishop Ratherius drove the whole community out of the ancient Roman city of Verona. Jews were found, according to good authority, at Treviso in 905 and subsequently, and at Trieste in 949; and from their presence the existence of organized congregations at these places may perhaps be assumed. In the neighborhood of Rome, under the benevolent rule of the Popes, large bodies continued to flourish, forming a reservoir of population from which enterprising pioneers pushed out from time to time in all directions, especially northwards. As the commerce of Venice grew, she attracted, in an ever increasing degree, traders from all parts of Europe, who included at this period a very considerable proportion of Jews. But nevertheless, the original outlook of the Republic remained unchanged.

Jealous for the Holy Catholic Faith, she refused to give hospitality to such stubborn infidels, whose competition moreover she dreaded. This spirit of intolerance showed itself at a primitive period of Venetian history, in the very first recorded mention of the Jews in the annals of the Republic. Thus she set the tradition which was followed more or less faithfully during the whole course of her history.

About the year 932, conflicting reports reached Europe about recent happenings in the Holy Land, then as always the principal center of interest for each of the three great monotheistic faiths. A certain Jew, lately come from the Orient, was spreading through Germany a tale which redounded considerably to the glory of his own coreligionists. There had been held in Jerusalem, he reported, a religious disputation between Jews and Christians, in which the former had been completely triumphant. Their victory had been endorsed by a supernatural phenomenon (an earthquake seems to be indicated), in consequence of which much damage had been caused to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The Doge of Venice, Pietro Candiano II, wrote to the Emperor, indignantly denying this account. The truth of the matter, he said, was very different. There had indeed been a religious disputation in Jerusalem, in which, thanks to their bribery of the Moslem authorities, the Jews had gained the formal victory. To vindicate the Christian cause, however, a miracle had occurred in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, in consequence of which very large numbers of the infidels had embraced the true faith.

The Doge trusted that the authorities in Germany would do their best to suppress the slanderous report which had gone about, and would prevent the faith of Christ from further dishonor by this means. On being informed of the truth the Jews might perhaps be induced to submit to baptism. Those who did not should be forced to leave the realm.

This virulent epistle shows clearly enough the light in which the Jews were regarded in early Venice, and makes it highly improbable that any were to be found settled there at this time. Even exclusion was not sufficient for contemporary opinion. A few years later, in 945, the Senate issued a decree forbidding the captains of vessels sailing in Oriental waters from taking any Jews or other merchants on board; an interesting sidelight showing how far they were then identified with international trade. This is the first mention of the Jews in the legislation of the Republic.

So rigidly protectionist a measure was obviously incapable of strict enforcement. Trade, after all, implies some degree of reciprocity, and cannot be made the monopoly of one of the two parties in the transaction. It was inevitable that depots should have been established in Venice by foreign merchants —mainly Germans from across the Alps to the north or else Levantines from the Byzantine Empire and its neighbors to the East. Both of these classes, and especially the second, must necessarily have comprised a certain proportion of Jews. The Venetians cordially disliked their acumen, and detested their religious beliefs; but, however much

such action might have been desired, it was absolutely out of the question to exclude them utterly. Jews inevitably passed through the city on their way between East and West, for the Venetians had the monopoly of the carrying trade. It was impossible in every case to hurry them on their way, and to prevent them from carrying out, perhaps, some quiet commercial deal during the course of their stay. At the worst, the Jews could avail themselves of the coöperation of Gentiles, whether as bona fide partners or as mere cloaks, and through such means they might be enabled to carry on trade in the lagoons undisturbed. Thus a transient Jewish population gradually gathered in the city. As early as 1152, it is said to have reached a total of as many as 1300 souls—possibly an exaggeration, but a clear proof nevertheless that they must already have formed an important nucleus. They were not indeed permitted to reside in the heart of the city. They had to deposit their merchandise and to conduct their affairs on the island of Spinalunga, across the channel opposite S. Marco. This spot—at that time a marshy waste intersected by numerous canals—ultimately received, by reason of its infidel inhabitants, the name of *Giudecca*,[1] which it still retains. This title is first encountered in a document of 1252. For long centuries after, the eye of credulity was able to perceive on the island what was confidently asserted to be the ruins of the two ancient synagogues in which these outcasts had observed their religious

[1] This is the most probable, but not the only, derivation suggested for the name (*giudeo* = Jew).

rites. Down to the last days of the Venetian Republic, the part played by the Jews in her Levantine trade remained of the utmost importance, and those who were engaged in it received a preferential treatment which distinguished them from the main body of their coreligionists. Ancient records speak even of a Jew who was instrumental in introducing this vital branch of commerce to the city. In 1290, the importance of the Jewish traders was recognized in a decree whereby a duty of 5 per cent was levied on all merchandise imported or exported through their means. Henceforth, their position was recognized, and, to some extent, assured.

With the spread of the Venetian territories, from the eleventh century onwards, the Republic came into increasingly close relationship with some of the older Jewish centers. Ancient communities had existed all along the Dalmatian coast, where Venice became paramount in 1085. On the mainland, her conquests gradually spread till they embraced many cities which had behind them a long tradition of tolerance. In the Byzantine Empire, where the Venetian influence became almost supreme after the so-called Fourth Crusade in 1204, numerous settlements had existed since classical times; and in many of the islands in the Levant which came under the rule of the Republic at about this time there were similarly prosperous communities of great antiquity. This was the case especially in the Greek islands, then the center of the silk industry, which was entirely in Jewish hands.

In Constantinople, the community remained under

the authority of the Venetian *bailo* even after the Byzantine reconquest. In return for his protection, they paid him considerable amounts in taxation. Thus he received ten *hyperpheres*[2] on his appointment, and an equal amount each year upon the feasts of Christmas, Michaelmas, Annunciation, and S. Marco. Besides this, he was given a tribute of thirty pairs of boots each winter and as many brooms in March. From the Jews of Salonica, then a poor and decayed port, the Republic received at a later period the sum of 1,000 *hyperpheres* yearly, subsequently reduced, by reason of their extreme poverty, to 800.

By the close of the thirteenth century, despite its economic and religious intolerance, Venice comprised among its subjects large numbers of Jews scattered about here and there throughout its heterogeneous Empire. They must have been familiar visitors to the capital—whether on matters of trade or of politics; while a few no doubt found it desirable to settle there permanently. A total exclusion of her own subjects was an obvious impossibility. Thus the intolerance of the Republic was gradually broken down, and the city became recognized as a center of Jewish population. Rabbi Isaiah di Trani, the most prominent Italian Talmudist of the first half of the thirteenth century, was familiar with Venice, where he resided for some time. When in 1288 the scholarly Hillel of Verona endeavored to convene a conference to settle the dispute which was raging in connection

[2] The Byzantine standard of coinage, equivalent to the Italian florin.

with the writings of Maimonides, he had no hesitation in suggesting the city as one of the alternative places of meeting.[2a]

During the course of the fourteenth century, a new element entered into the Jewish relations with Venice. Since the tenth century, when the terms Jew and Merchant were almost synonymous, much had occurred. The age of martyrdom for European Jewry had begun. It was a martyrdom, not merely of the body, but also of the soul. Society had been reorganized on a more and more religious basis. Little by little, the Jews had been excluded from all the ordinary walks of life. The feudal system, and the growing insecurity, had made it impossible for them to continue to engage in agriculture. They had been prevented by the close organization of craft brotherhoods from engaging in handicrafts, save in exceptional cases. The jealousy of the merchant guilds, enforced in most instances by governmental prejudice, was excluding them more and more even from trade. Forbidden to hold positions which might entail any semblance of authority over true believers, they had been squeezed out of the administration. Only one profession was left open to them—that of money lender.

Meanwhile, an impossible idealism, supported by a distorted exegesis and a false logic, had resulted in

[2a] The name of Venice is generally associated with a doughty polemist, Jacob ben Elijah, who addressed a famous polemical letter to the apostate Pablo Christiani in about 1260–70. There is every reason, however, to believe that this scholar originated either from Valencia (Spain) or Valence (France), and never even visited Italy.

the imposition by the Church of a more and more severe prohibition upon the lending of money at interest. The Bible, it was said, specifically prohibited it. Aristotle, second only to the Bible in authority in those times, frowned upon it. Nature itself, which did not make money breed by the ordinary processes of reproduction, implicitly condemned it. Accordingly, by slow degrees, the Church took up an attitude of unqualified opposition to 'usury', as it was termed, whatever the rate of interest, whether small or great. Ultimately, in the Lateran Council of 1179 (the same which, with its successor of thirty-six years later, marked the culmination of the anti-Jewish legislation of the Middle Ages), the attack reached its climax, Christian burial being refused to all who followed the heinous practice. The prohibition was however a religious one, leveled against true believers only. Thus the Jews, just at the period when they were excluded from ordinary walks of life, found themselves thrust by force of circumstances into the most unhonored and least popular of all pursuits. Their own authorities disapproved of the practice; where a fellow Jew was in question, they flatly forbade it. Nevertheless, in the end, they had to bow to force of circumstances. By the close of the thirteenth century, the vast majority of the Jews of the countries subject to the Catholic Church, with the partial exception of southern Italy and Spain, were overwhelmingly confined in spite of themselves to this degraded, and degrading, occupation.

Not that the profession in question was, after all,

so reprehensible. It is, indeed, absolutely essential in any state of society based upon a monetary economy; (the Biblical prohibition had envisaged a purely pastoral and agricultural life). The poor man may need a loan to cover his immediate wants in some exceptional time of family stress; the rich man, to assist him in some fresh remunerative enterprise; the peasant, in order to tide over the period between seedtime and harvest. But any loan is to some extent uncertain, the interest charged being in part a species of insurance against loss. Moreover, the borrower who temporarily deprives the lender of the use of his capital and thus makes it impossible for it to be put to any productive purpose assuredly owes some sort of compensation. The whole of modern economy is built up on the credit system of which interest is an absolutely integral part; and at the close of the Middle Ages the process was already well advanced.

To all such considerations, the Church gave no heed. It made no differentiation between a low rate of interest, which was just and inevitable, and a high one, which might be iniquitous. It characterized all alike as usury, and condemned them without distinction. Viewed aright, this was not idealism—it was blindness; and it could have been justifiable only if the Church itself had been ready to provide, without interest, at least the loans which were at times absolutely necessary to the existence of the poor. This, however, was the last thing which it was prepared to do. Legal fictions were indeed found to get round the impracticable

regulations. Throughout Europe, the Italians had a bad name as usurers, their rapacity often making the general population regret deeply the departure of their Jewish competitors. The hands of the papal curia itself were not clean from the offence. In Italy, the Tuscans became notorious for their activities; though, at the time of Dante, the Paduans had become preëminent, and received exemplary punishment in his *Inferno*.

All these, however, tended to concentrate upon affairs on a larger scale. Smaller operations, which were more risky, and therefore less popular, were thus left almost exclusively to the Jews, to whom the canonical restrictions did not apply. It was by reason of their activities only that the economic situation became bearable. In Italy, their functions were semi-official. Throughout the country, when it was found that facilities for borrowing money on pledge were urgently required, and that the clandestine activities of Christian usurers had led to a merciless exploitation of the townspeople, the local government would determine to regularize matters by calling in some Jews. Negotiations would be entered into with one or more families, varying in number according to the size of the place, with whom a formal agreement would be drawn up. The Jews would be granted the exclusive right of opening 'banks,' as they were called, for the purpose of lending money in the city on pledge. The amount of interest which might be charged (which generally compared very favorably with the rates extorted by the Christian usurers) was carefully regulated. Freedom from persecution, and

the quiet and undisturbed practice of their religion, were at the same time guaranteed. The Jews on their part would undertake to provide a certain minimum capital, to observe certain regulations as regards the sale of pledges and similar matters, and to show their appreciation of the privileges granted them by a considerable payment to the civic treasury. This mutual contract (*condotta* or 'conduct' as it was termed) was generally valid for a limited number of years—mostly three, five, or ten. At the close of this period it lapsed automatically, and both sides were open to make a fresh contract. The center from which these Jewish bankers operated was Rome and the neighboring territories of central Italy, where the Jewish communities were of very ancient establishment. From the fourteenth century, their numbers were reinforced by German Jews who had been driven to seek refuge beyond the Alps from the merciless persecutions which were taking place in northern Europe. Such loan banks were established in Treviso in 1294, at Padua in 1369, and elsewhere in the region at about the same period. It was not long before Venice, despite her traditional antipathy towards the Jews, was at last forced to bow to economic necessity and to follow suit.

The problem of providing money to relieve the most pressing needs of the poorest classes of the city had long before become critical. Already in 1298, the rates of interest charged by the irregular Christian usurers had grown so crushing that a special commission had been appointed to inquire into the problem. Possibly it was in consequence of

this that the Jewish loan bankers received their first invitation. The Venetians retained, however, certain qualms. The infidel usurers were not admitted into the city itself, but had to conduct their activities from the neighboring township of Mestre, the nearest point on the mainland, which was acquired by purchase from the Lords of Verona in 1336. Here the Jews were empowered to set up their establishments, to which the citizens had to betake themselves to obtain ready money to tide them over their momentary difficulties at any period when they were hard pressed. The inconveniences in this were, however, enormous; and ultimately the Republic had to yield to circumstances. On June 28th, 1366, an agreement was concluded with Jewish money lenders from Mestre, who were invited to come to the capital to carry on their activities. For the first time, the settlement of Jews in Venice was formally authorized.

The terms of this earliest *condotta* have not been preserved. It lasted apparently for seven years, being renewed in 1373, 1378, and 1385—for five, seven, and ten years respectively. On the last occasion, the nascent community was put under the supervision of the mercantile board known as the *Sopraconsoli*, to whom a list of the names of the Jewish bankers had to be presented. For the monopoly of maintaining three loan banks in the city, they had to pay heavy sums, which in 1385 were brought up to 4,000 ducats yearly.[3] In compensation for this,

[3] The Ducat (so called from the head of the Doge, or *Duca*, which it bore) was the standard unit of Venetian coinage; it was

they were exempted from all other taxes excepting duties on imports and exports. The rate of interest had been limited originally to 4 per cent. This was however found to be uneconomical, and was subsequently raised to 8 or 10 per cent upon pledge, or 12 per cent without it. Provided that adequate security were forthcoming, the banks were not at liberty to refuse loans of amounts up to thirty ducats, to the poor of the city, for whose benefit they were supposed to exist. However, they were forbidden to take in pledge any object used in Catholic ceremonial worship. As to the identity of these settlers, we know little. However, in 1389 one of the principal banks, working on a guaranteed capital of 5,000 ducats, was conducted by a certain Jew named Levi and his sister—an interesting, but by no means exceptional, instance of the economic emancipation of the Jewish woman in the Middle Ages.

The original *condotta* of 1366 was repeatedly renewed until the close of the century—on the last occasion, as has been seen, for the unprecedented period of ten years. However, the presence of Jews in the city was always irksome to the pious Venetians; and in 1394, when the agreement was about to expire, the Senate determined to make an attempt to dispense with their services. This seems to have

commonly known at a later period as *Zequin*. The golden ducat which is that more frequently referred to, was equivalent to $1.46 in modern currency; the silver ducat being $0.83. It must, however, be realized that these amounts are only approximate and give little idea of the purchasing power of the coin, which constantly varied.

been in some measure the result of a recent untoward happening. One of the banks at Venice was conducted in conjunction with a Venetian subject named Giacomo Panischi by a certain Anselmo, son of Samuel, a Jew of Nuremberg, whose brothers Jacob and Abraham were similarly engaged at Verona and Vicenza respectively. In consequence of a private quarrel they procured—without obtaining proper authorization—the arrest of their gentile partner during a visit to the last named place. This was considered a crime against the State, and proceeded against accordingly. Anselmo was imprisoned and fined, while his two brothers fled and were condemned as contumacious. This affair apparently served the Senate in part as its pretext. It asserted that the conduct of the Jews during the period of the past *condotta* had been 'scandalous.' They had not observed the prescribed regulations in the transactions which they had carried on. Their activities had been so wide that, unless some drastic remedy were applied, all of the movable property of the city would rapidly drift into their hands. Accordingly, it was determined not to renew the *condotta*; with the result that, on its expiry in the following year, the Jewish bankers left the city.

It was easy to dismiss the Jews. To replace them, however, was not so simple. The poor were left entirely unprovided for in emergencies. A minor economic crisis resulted. Accordingly, a fresh arrangement was hastily concluded with the exiles. However, in order to save appearances, they were not allowed to return to the city itself. They had to

carry on their activities, as before, at Mestre, where all deeds were to be drawn up. At Venice, they were to be allowed to show themselves only for a period not exceeding fifteen days at a stretch, in order to attend the sales of unredeemed pledges by public auction at the Rialto. For the first time, they were ordered to wear the yellow badge which was to distinguish them for contumely from the rest of mankind, in accordance with the injunctions of the Holy Catholic Church.

The effort to rid the city entirely of the Jews proved a complete fiasco. On the pretext of attending the sales at the Rialto, they would come across the lagoon in large numbers. After the lapse of a fortnight, they would obediently return to Mestre for a day, and then come back again for another similar period. Meanwhile, they conducted their various activities almost without question; and the parishes of S. Apollinare and S. Silvestro were said to be full of them. Accordingly, an order was made that a period of four months should elapse between one visit and another. Even this was not sufficient to effect total exclusion; and the continual reënactment of the provisions regarding the distinctive badge and various occupational limitations show that, throughout the fifteenth century, the Jew must have remained a familiar figure in Venice. In 1496, in order to end this once for all, a regulation was made prohibiting any Jew from staying in the city for more than a fortnight in all each year, and stipulating that after this limit had been reached, twelve months were to elapse before any further

visit might be paid. At the same time, it was laid down that none of the banks at Mestre might be represented at the sales of unredeemed pledges by more than one individual. The Jews, we are informed, were at their wits' ends on receiving the intelligence of these new regulations. Nevertheless, it is hardly to be doubted that they found some way out of this difficulty, as they had done out of others on former occasions.

During this period, the feeling against the Jew was increasing throughout Italy. This was due in a considerable measure to the rising tide of theological prejudice, but also, in part, to economic causes. To see the Jewish loan bankers flourishing by reason of the short sighted policy of the Church was too much for a zealous Catholic to bear. An agitation had therefore been begun for the replacement of the Jewish usurers by public pawnbroking establishments, conducted on a charitable basis—*Monti di Pietà*, or mounts of piety, as they were called.[4] The movement was inspired by various Franciscan friars, especially Bernardino da Feltre. The experiment met with mixed success. The Dominicans, as a point of principle, questioned the legality and the morality of the acceptance of any interest, however moderate, even by a public institution. In some places, the rates charged had to be so high that they increased rather than lessened the burden on the common people. In others, they were so low that the

[4] The *monte*, or mount, originally indicated the pile of coins which the banker or money changer had before him on his table. Hence it ultimately came to signify a bank.

institution was unable to pay its way. The Jews were not opposed to the principle; indeed, it is on record that they sometimes left money to support the new foundations. However, it was a natural corollary, emphasized by many of the founders—especially by Bernardino da Feltre himself—that the Jews were henceforth superfluous, and might be expelled without compunction. It happened more than once that they were summoned back after a few years, to supply by their skill what it had been impossible to replace by mere enthusiasm. In many places, however, the new movement spelled the end of a Jewish connection which had existed in some cases for centuries. On the other hand, the reverse policy was indicated by the example of the Pope, who consistently accorded the Jews of his dominions a somewhat contemptuous tolerance. Under such circumstances, it was difficult to know what policy a Christian State should follow. In 1463, the Venetian government applied to the papal legate, the Cardinal Bessarion, for a definite ruling as to whether it was permissible for the Jews to be tolerated in its dominions. The reply was in full accordance with the liberal traditions of the Catholic Church: that there was no objection whatsoever to such action, provided only that proper precautions were taken. Accordingly, by a majority of nine to three, with four abstentions, the Council of Ten resolved that the Jews should continue to be permitted to reside in the territories under their rule. Some of the subject cities, indeed, remained insistent; and the Senate yielded to their importunities. As far as the capital

itself was concerned, however, toleration continued; both for the itinerant merchants and others in the city itself, and for the loan bankers now relegated to Mestre.

These periodical *condotte* had been for the Jewish bankers only. Other categories amongst their compatriots were treated with greater liberality, and were subject to no similar restrictions. The Levantine merchants in particular had continued to come to trade in the city as before. In 1386, following upon the renewal of one of the *condotte*, the presence of the Levantine merchants was for the first time officially recognized, and they were given special privileges. In the same year, Venice acquired the control of the island of Corfu, where the Jews constituted an honored and important element in the population. The Jewish community was represented by one of the six members who went to Venice to arrange the terms of surrender; and amongst the rights guaranteed to them at this time was that of free and undisturbed trade throughout the Venetian dominions. In 1321, several Jewish merchants from the Venetian dependencies figured in a claim made by the Republic against the Byzantine Empire for compensation for damages received. By the middle of the century, the revenues of the Republic included six hundred ducats received each year from the Jewish merchants from over seas; although as late as 1476 it was expressly forbidden for those of the Venetian possessions to trade in the city, whether in their own name or in that of an accommodating gentile friend. With the rise of the Turkish power

on the ruins of that of Byzantium, the status of the Jews in the Levant was greatly improved, and their mercantile importance became enhanced; while the greater likelihood of receiving diplomatic protection while abroad made them more venturesome. From the moment of the establishment of peace with Turkey in 1479, Jews had been accustomed to come to Venice with the convoys from the Levant for purposes of trade; and when in 1504 some who had recently arrived on the galleys from Alexandria were arrested, their release was immediately ordered. Not that the Jewish commercial relations with Venice were restricted to the inhabitants of the Near East. In 1308, a Jewish merchant of Syracuse was assassinated on Venetian territory near Zara, and the king of Sicily put pressure on the Republic to see that his property was restored to his heirs. At a slightly later period, there was living at Venice itself another Sicilian Jew, whose assault on an apostate betrayed more zeal than caution. In 1395, a certain Dumazco, son of Abraham Levi, of Burgos, who was farming the harbor dues of the realm of Castile, signed a convention remitting one third of all ordinary dues on goods imported into the country for the next two years by Venetian merchants—no doubt, in return for favors received.

Even the northern countries, where the Jews formed a smaller proportion of the mercantile classes, were represented to a certain extent. They were not indeed welcomed at the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, where the German merchants had their guildhouse and their headquarters. Nevertheless, it was an utter impos-

sibility to exclude them from it entirely, more especially considering the profits which they might be expected to bring to its coffers. It was there that those who came from Germany had to pay their entrance dues; and as early as 1329 the case is recorded of four Jews from Zurich who got into trouble because they had arrived on Friday, when the establishment was closed, and neglected to perform the formality upon the next day, as being their Sabbath.

The commercial activities of the Jews at Venice were of sufficient importance to receive special governmental attention. When in 1390 the Emperor Wenceslas callously canceled all debts due to the Jews of Germany, sharing the spoils with the debtors, he requested the Doge to safeguard the German merchants in Venice from being molested there on account of what they had previously owed. The request was benevolently considered, with the result that the domestic authorities at the German settlement were authorized to decide in all disputes in which Jews from their native country were concerned. Some northern merchants, notwithstanding the exclusion of all infidels from the *Fondaco*, nominated Jews as their representatives for the conclusion of their commercial affairs in Venice. We may suspect that at times this formality was a mere pretext, intended by the Jews to secure trading facilities which would otherwise have been forbidden. The community of the flourishing commercial republic of Nuremberg, which controlled trade routes north of the Alps in much the same way as Venice did

to the south, was especially well represented among the local merchants. There are still extant commercial accounts in the Venetian dialect of a certain Jew named Nicholas of Leibnitz, dating back to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. In 1491, a certain Samuel of Marele, purveyor to the Imperial Court, was sent to Venice to purchase cloths of silk and gold; and, at the express request of the Emperor, the Council of Ten permitted him to dispense with the Jewish badge and to go armed, accompanied by an escort of two servants. Other recent arrivals, not being allowed to trade in new commodities, turned their attention to *strazzaria*, or trade in secondhand articles, particularly wearing apparel. This was forbidden by law in 1497.

Throughout this period, the Jewish physician was a familiar figure in Venice. Medicine is a calling for which the Jews have shown a peculiar predilection throughout their history. In the early Middle Ages, their intimate contact with the Moslem world, then the principal center of every branch of science, gave them a marked advantage in this sphere. Even when the supremacy had passed to Christian Europe, their innate ability continued to manifest itself. This was, moreover, the only branch of study which at that time they could turn to practical uses. It is true that, from a remote period, the Catholic Church had sedulously forbidden faithful Christians to avail themselves of the services of Jewish practitioners. The reasons were obvious. The patient is subjected to his physician in a manner which to the medieval mentality seemed little less than indecent, in cases

where the latter was a Jew. In addition to authority over the body, he might sometimes acquire control over the mind. Moreover, in case of a fatal outcome to the illness, he might prevent, through carelessness or deliberately, the administration of the last sacraments of the Church, and thus cause a pure Christian soul to run the risk of eternal damnation. The prohibition to employ Jewish physicians goes back therefore to the Dark Ages. However, men generally preferred to risk their souls by disobedience to the injunctions of the Church rather than imperil their bodies by entrusting them to the care of some clumsy Gentile. Accordingly, the employment of Jewish physicians was almost invariable throughout Christian Europe during the whole of the Middle Ages and after. Venice was no exception to the rule.

In 1331, permission to practice in the city was given to a certain Jewish physician named Leone (Judah), in consideration of his great reputation and of the high honor in which he was held.[5] Towards the

[5] There was also at Venice a regular sequence of converts from Judaism who were engaged in the practice of medicine. Thus in 1334, we find a certain Giovanni, or Guglielmo, son of Mauezio of Rome, who was permitted to practice notwithstanding the fact that he had studied from Hebrew textbooks only. In 1358 a similar privilege was granted to one Agostino, who had been converted to Christianity with all of his family. In 1332, Master Francesco, a physician, requested permission to go to Rome so that he might bring up his children in a Christian environment. In 1401, license to practice was given to Abraham Niccolò, a converted Jew—possibly identical with the convert Solomon Abraham, of Egypt, who received a diploma from Pope Boniface IX in the same year. One Master Andreas abjured Judaism in 1421 under such circumstances that he was assaulted by some of the more zealous of his former coreligionists.

end of the century, the numbers increased. In 1395, when the Jews were expelled from the city, there was some question as to whether the Jewish physicians (the most noteworthy amongst whom was a certain Master Solomon) should be included or not. It was decided unanimously that they should. However, it was not long before the provision began to be neglected and Jewish physicians duly licensed by the *Giustizia Vecchia* began to figure in the city again. In 1419, this same Master Solomon, or another Jewish physician of the same name, was permitted to practice medicine in Venice in recognition of the noteworthy cures which he had already effected in the city. The result of these exceptions was so encouraging that they became the rule; and on April 11th, 1443, a decree was issued permitting Jews to practice medicine henceforth in Venice without formality. It was in vain that fanatical Christians objected to the concession, and that Ludovico Foscarini exerted his influence upon the spiritual adviser of the Doge to obtain the rescission of the decree. These expostulations had no permanent result and the tradition of the Jewish medical practitioner remained unbroken. At the close of the fifteenth century, Venice harbored for a time the learned Elijah del Medigo, a native of Crete, distinguished as physician, translator and philosopher, and the greatest exponent of the Aristotelian system of his day. It was here that he compiled in 1480 his philosophical treatise on the *Efficiency of the World*, which earned him such a reputation that he was summoned to Padua to act as umpire in a

dispute which had arisen. Here he made the acquaintance of Pico della Mirandola, whose tutor he subsequently became in Florence. The fame of the Venetian physicians spread far beyond the bounds of the city itself. One of them, another Master Leone, became medical attendant to the Grand Duke of Muscovy, and was publicly burned at Moscow in 1409 for failing to effect a cure.

When the wearing of the yellow hat became obligatory upon the Jews of Venice, exception was frequently made in favor of various physicians, to submit whom to these regulations would have been derogatory to the honor of the patricians upon whom they attended. In 1412, all licenses of the sort were revoked, but they soon began to be granted again, resulting in periodical repetitions of the revocation at intervals throughout the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, any Jewish physician of eminence continued to regard exemption from this humiliating obligation as his prerogative, and he generally did not have much difficulty in finding an influential patient who would be willing to exert exalted authority on his behalf. Thus in 1502 Master Joseph was officially permitted to wear the black headdress of the ordinary Christian practitioner, in consequence of the intervention of the illustrious Lorenzo Suarez, whose medical attendant he was. He is perhaps identical with the Roman Jew of that name, who subsequently received considerable privileges from Julius II, and son of that Samuel Sarphati who acted as body physician to a whole succession of Popes. These are some of the earliest names in a

noble series which continued down to the period of the fall of the Republic.

Even when the community of Venice was small and barely tolerated, the city loomed large in Jewish eyes; for it was the port of embarkation for the Orient, where Jewish pilgrims took ship when they went on pilgrimage to visit the land of their fathers or to settle down in one of the holy cities. At all times, there could be seen about the quay side the eager faces of pilgrims, anxiously awaiting the sailing of some vessel which could bring them one stage nearer the goal of their hopes. Often, they brought with them the bodies of their near and dear ones, who had expressed the desire to be buried on the sacred soil which had been the center of their prayers while they lived. Some months later, the pious wayfarers would return in triumph, with their garments still rent in eloquent testimony of the desolation which they had witnessed. With them, they would bear some Palestinian soil (*terra santa*, as it was called) to be sprinkled in their coffins when they died, so that their ashes might mingle in the end with the sacred dust. We may imagine them as they landed, surrounded by excited groups, anxious to hear the latest news of the land in which every Jew's hopes and dreams were centered. Thus it was in Venice that Meshullam of Volterra arrived on October 19th, 1482, after an exciting voyage under the guidance of a drunken pilot, on his return from a pilgrimage of which he has left a detailed and fascinating account. The journey from Venice to Jerusalem took, on an average, about forty days.

It was a token of medieval tolerance that sometimes the Jews were permitted to join Catholic pilgrims on the journey.

In the course of the fifteenth century, this tradition was broken. A petty squabble amongst the Christian sects in Jerusalem had resulted in the interference of the Moslem Government, the custody of the Tombs of the Kings being taken by the Sultan out of the hands of the Franciscans. The latter followed the time-honored practice of blaming the Jews for what had occurred. They even went so far as to accuse the Jews of an attempt to purchase their own conventual church in order to convert it into a synagogue. The suggestion must have been made sarcastically; for the few score Jewish families living in the Holy City at the time (amongst whom the women, principally old, outnumbered the men by ten to one) were so poverty stricken that they were unable to pay the communal taxation, and had to sell the synagogue property, including even the scrolls of the Law, in order to defray their most elementary expenses. The only foundation for the allegation lay in the harmless fact that a certain Jew, better off than the rest, had purchased a small parcel of land on Mount Zion. By the time that these reports reached Europe, they were still further exaggerated. Pope Martin V accordingly issued a Bull directed to the two seafaring republics of Venice and Ancona, forbidding them henceforth to convey Jews to the Holy Land on their vessels under pain of excommunication (1437). The order was punctiliously carried out, some sea captains going so

far, in excess of zeal, as to fling their Jewish passengers into the sea. When in 1487 Obadiah di Bertinoro, the father of the Jewish settlement in Jerusalem, set out from Città di Castello in northern Italy on his momentous voyage to the Holy Land, he had to travel overland to Naples, and then take ship by an indirect route; with the result that his journey took him in all over one year, instead of the usual six weeks. Only on his arrival did he discover that the embargo had recently been raised. By waiting a little he could have sailed from Venice, saving thereby much time, considerable danger, and a great deal of money. Henceforth, the pilgrimages continued by the normal route, without interruption excepting in time of war.

Though it did not love the Jews, and barely tolerated them, the *Serenissima Dominante* (as the Venetian Government was called) at least would not allow them to be illtreated. There was a notable example of this during the wave of anti-Jewish frenzy that swept through Italy in 1475. Fra Bernardino da Feltre, the notorious Jew-baiter, was preaching Lenten sermons in the city of Trent, not far from the border of the Venetian territory. Failing to arouse the feelings of the faithful in the way that he desired, he began to give utterance to the most ghastly libels against the Jews, and predicted that on the occasion of the approaching Passover they would murder some Christian child for ritual purposes. By an unhappy coincidence, the body of a three-year-old boy named Simon was found by a couple of Jews at precisely that time drowned in the river.

The pretext was quite sufficient. All of the members of the community were arrested—men, women, and children—and mercilessly tortured until some of them made the requisite admissions. Then the principal amongst them were put to death, and the rest banished from the town. The child Simon was of course popularly revered as a martyr. A papal commissioner, sent to inquire into the case, reported that it was based upon a tissue of lies; and the Pope issued an encyclical letter prohibiting martyr's honors from being paid to the child any longer. Ultimately, however, common sense in the matter was overborne by popular feeling, and Blessed Simon of Trent entered into the official Calendar of the Catholic Church—one of the very few instances in which the atrocious blood libel has received its official sanction.

It was not long before the cult of the new martyr spread over the border into Venetian territory. Broadsheets recounting his history and the miracles performed at his shrine were hawked about the streets. His picture was painted and everywhere publicly displayed. Sermons on the marvelous recent happenings were delivered in every church. Ugly passions were naturally aroused. It became dangerous for a Jew to show himself in the streets. The central authorities would however neither countenance nor tolerate any disorder. In a sharp letter to the Podestà of Padua, where the popular feelings had reached their climax, the Doge ordered that all possible protection should be given to the Jews, inflammatory sermons especially being prohibited

(April, 1475). Though a little later the preachers were formally permitted to take the new martyr as the subject for their addresses, the previous complete prohibition was renewed a few weeks later.

The passions thus roused could not easily be allayed; and the case of Simon of Trent was followed by a whole wave of similar libelous accusations. A few miles out of Treviso, at that time subject to Venice, is a little village named Portobuffolè, which at that time harbored a diminutive Jewish community. In the Holy Week of 1480, a number of Jewish householders living here and in the immediate neighborhood were accused of having kidnaped a Christian child at Treviso, to use his blood in the celebration of the Passover. The accused men were arrested and taken to Venice, where, after the custom of the time, they were put to the torture. Three of them—Servadio, or Obadiah, Moses ben David of Treviso, and Jacob ben Simon, of Cologna, —driven to desperation by the agony, confessed whatever was desired of them. The result was a foregone conclusion. They were dragged from S. Marco to Santa Croce on hurdles, where they were burned to death. An eyewitness, who gives a gruesome account of the spectacle, tells how the oldest among them led the others in prayer, and urged them to support their martyrdom with fortitude. The survivors (with the exception of one who saved himself by a timely conversion) were banished in perpetuity from the Venetian territories, after first serving a long term of imprisonment. Six lawyers from the University of Padua had been

engaged, at the very considerable fee of 800 *zequins*, to defend the accused persons. So as to prevent them from making a profit out of iniquity, they were compelled to give what they had received as a free gift to the Church of S. Antonio.

Five years later, the libel was repeated in the neighborhood of Vicenza, where a child named Lorenzo Sossio, of Valrovina, was reported to have been martyred by certain Jews of Bassano. The details were vague and conflicting, and no concrete charge was ever preferred. Nevertheless, the case was taken as proved. The child was beatified by public opinion, prayers being offered up at his grave for centuries after. In consequence of the charge, the Jews were expelled from Vicenza (1485). For a long time afterwards, suspicions and feelings continued to run high. In 1506, an uncouth looking Hungarian Jew was seen bearing through the streets of Venice a weeping child who had lost his way. The man was looking for the parents of the child, but the mob suspected the worst and stoned him to death.

The year in which Columbus discovered America and profoundly influenced the destinies of mankind witnessed a radical change in the face of the Jewish world. The ancient communities, which had been established in Spain perhaps since the time of the second Temple, were driven out into exile. The refugees became familiar figures in every port of Italy and the Levant. Venetian shipmasters reaped a rich harvest in transporting them, sometimes with a conspicuous lack of humanity; and the communi-

ties of the Venetian island possessions, Candia and Corfu, lavished their charity to succor those who arrived destitute on their shores. A few years later, similar scenes on a smaller scale were witnessed when the Jews were expelled from Portugal; though the vast majority were on this occasion forced to become nominal converts to Christianity and remain in the country. To have excluded the refugees entirely from Venice at this juncture would have been an obvious impossibility; and many of them probably became permanent settlers. Judah Hayyat, a Rabbi from Malaga who arrived there on his way to Ferrara after an incredible odyssey of suffering, a year or two after the general expulsion, recounts with gratitude the kindness he received from the wealthy Spaniards whom he found on his arrival.

Amongst the refugees, the most illustrious were without doubt the members of the Abrabanel family. At its head was Don Isaac Abrabanel, philosopher, scholar, financier and statesman, in whom the most glorious traditions of Spanish Jewry seemed to be concentrated and revived. His life was one of continual wandering and unrest. Wherever he came he hoped at last for leisure to engage in his literary pursuits, but he was invariably disturbed by the insistent calls of the civil government upon his mature experience and advice. This he would give unstintingly until the time came for him to take up the wanderer's staff anew. Once, in early manhood, he had left all of his possessions behind him in Lisbon and fled for his life across the frontier, with the men-at-arms sent to arrest him

thundering at his heels. On the expulsion from Spain, which he had endeavored ineffectually to avert, he had taken up his residence at Naples, where he shortly after entered into the royal service. Disturbed by the French invasion, he followed the king to Messina, and later went to Corfu—then under the Venetian rule. On the restoration of quiet on the mainland, he returned to Monopoli, but ultimately settled in Venice. Here, in his old age, his services were requisitioned for the last time, by the king of Portugal, in which country he had been born; and he lavished his diplomatic tact and ability in negotiating a commercial treaty with the *Serenissima* for the control of the spice trade. It was in Venice that this last great medieval Jew died, though he was buried in Padua. His family, headed by his physician son Don Joseph, remained represented in the city for some time to come.

Thus, despite the official policy of intolerance, the nucleus of a settled community gradually grew up in Venice. There were merchants from Corfu, the Levant, and elsewhere; physicians, enjoying the highest patronage, who were formally permitted to remain in the city notwithstanding the exclusion of their coreligionists; penniless refugees from the Peninsula or elsewhere, the flotsam and jetsam cast up by the recent expulsions; bankers from the mainland, attending the auction sales of unredeemed pledges, and remaining perhaps surreptitiously for longer than the fifteen days permitted to them by law. Records of Jewish visitors to Venice, of Hebrew manuscripts written there, or of rabbinic savants

associated with the city, become more and more common. Venetian delicacies were familiar to German Jewry from the fourteenth century onwards. A member of the Luzzatto family, writing in the early seventeenth century, reports how his ancestors had been resident under the protection of the Lion of S. Marco for over two centuries. The importance and the continuity of the Jewish settlement throughout this period are amply demonstrated by the manifestations of governmental solicitude on their behalf. They were repeatedly enjoined to wear the Jewish badge to distinguish them from the rest of the population; to refrain from intimate relations with Christian women; or to forbear to engage in certain prohibited occupations. At times of danger, the government protected them. At times of tranquillity, it checked them. The foundations of the settlement of the Jews in Venice were already laid, but it was left to external events to provide the occasion for its formal authorization.

CHAPTER II

THE THREE NATIONS

In 1508 that penniless knight-errant, the Emperor Maximilian, entered into a piratical League at Cambrai with the Pope, France, Spain, and the majority of the Italian powers with the laudable object of the conquest and partition of the Venetian possessions. The armed forces of the *Serenissima* were defeated at Agnadello on May 14th, 1509, and the whole territory lay open to conquest. The confederate forces advanced upon the capital. As usual in any time of disturbance, the Jews suffered disproportionately: a first object of attack by the invaders, of suspicion by the defenders, and of the revenge of whichever ultimately remained victorious. At Treviso, the houses of the Jews were sacked by the people, with the exception of that of a certain Calimano, who enjoyed unusual popularity. Subsequently, they were all expelled from this place, as well as from Verona, where similar scenes had been enacted. At Bassano, Castelfranco, Asolo, and Citadella the authorities had to intervene to protect them. From Padua, notwithstanding the difficulties of transport, all who could do so fled on the approach of the Imperial forces. Mestre, at the very gate of Venice, was sacked and burned to the ground, the pledges in the loan banks being conveyed away by boat in the nick of time.

The Jewish population of all these places sought refuge in Venice—a right guaranteed to them in time of emergency by their *condotta*, which had been confirmed only a few months before. It was hither that Elijah Capsali, the Cretan historian, who was then studying at Padua, escorted his relatives and his revered teacher, Isserlein, notwithstanding the fact that the hire of a boat had increased from ten *piccoli* to twice as many ducats, in a few days. The enormously wealthy Hayim Meshullam, otherwise known as Vita del Banco, a prosperous and charitable banker of the same city, installed himself with needless ostentation in the Casa Bernardo, which had long been standing empty owing to its excessive rental. Subsequently, he had cause to repent this action. In the three parishes of S. Canciano, S. Agostino, and S. Geremia, upwards of five thousand refugees were installed within a brief period. Here they transferred from the mainland the activities of their licensed banks, which owing to the widespread distress had become all the more necessary. Every day their numbers grew. Thus one day they had occasion to ransom in the heart of the town, in the Merceria itself, a Jewish prisoner of war from Castelfranco, who was being dragged along by his captors. When the New Year and the accompanying Jewish solemnities arrived, they were formally permitted to hold divine service—a privilege that had been withheld in Venice throughout the past century. Extemporized places of worship were accordingly set up in several houses.

For some time, the main preoccupation of the

government was the war. On June 3rd, 1509, Padua had opened its gates to the Imperial forces without firing a shot. Ten days later, a representative arrived from the Emperor to take charge of this new conquest. Those of the Jews who were left determined to present him with a gift in order to win his favor, as the rest of the inhabitants had done. The learned Rabbi Abraham Minz (who only a month or two before had succeeded his father Judah as principal of the famous talmudical academy of that city) waited upon him bearing an enormous silver basin of splendid workmanship. "What is the use of the basin without the jug?" grumbled the rough soldier, by way of showing his gratitude. The Rabbi, with admirable presence of mind, explained that the other article was still at the silversmith's, but would be ready within a few days. This gift ultimately entailed grave consequences for the Jews. When the authorities at Venice heard of it, Vita Meshullam and Naphtali (Hertz) Wertheim, the most notable amongst the refugees, were arrested on a charge of sympathizing with the enemy. They were released after a lengthy imprisonment; but the latter died in consequence of his sufferings. Abraham Minz himself was banished in perpetuity from the Venetian territories for his personal complicity. Nevertheless, for the moment the presentation achieved its object.

The influx of refugees had brought about a serious state of overcrowding in the capital, where even drinking water was becoming scarce. To cope with the situation, the Senate instructed the Jews from Padua and Mestre to return to their homes, notwith-

standing the fact that the smoke which was going up from the ruins of the latter place was still visible across the lagoon. Assault upon the capital was expected almost hourly, and the fugitives were glad of the opportunity to escape. The superintendent of the customs, however, had the prescience to refuse in most cases to grant the necessary permission to leave. This was a piece of good fortune greater than was realized at the moment. By now, the Senate had recovered from its state of panic, and resolved to set about a counter offensive. A force was sent to reoccupy Padua; and it was followed by thousands of irregulars, who were provided at the Arsenal with improvised weapons and swarmed out at the rear of the army. Amongst these were large numbers of the younger Jews, whose services were not disdained at this juncture. They arrived just in time to join in the sack, which continued for several days. The Jews were inevitably the worst sufferers, their coreligionists among the assailants doing nothing to alleviate their lot. The banks of Hertz Wertheim and Vita Meshullam were pillaged from top to bottom, at enormous loss to their owners. They were by no means the only sufferers. A few members of the community were killed, and many more made prisoners in the hope of ransom. Amongst the latter was the aged Menahem del Medigo, the uncle of Elijah Capsali, who was recaptured and barbarously maltreated even after the sum demanded for his release had been paid. The losses suffered at Padua, of which the Jews bore a very considerable part, amounted to 150,000

ducats. Vita Meshullam and others of the refugees in Venice made insistent demands upon the authorities, requesting the restoration of their property and the punishment of the culprits. The Council of Ten went so far as to send to the mainland an order that all persons found bringing valuables into the city should be stopped, and note made concerning the original ownership of the booty. This, however, had little result. Meanwhile, the Jews had to bear their usual disproportionate share in the emergency war taxation. Ten thousand ducats were levied from those of the capital and of the *terra ferma*, and 4,000 (half of which came from Candia) from those of the Levant.

Meanwhile, the warfare on the mainland continued, Mestre remaining in ruins. Venice was still crowded with refugees. With the removal of the immediate peril, the Venetians began to realize that in spite of their long efforts to keep their city clear from the taint of unbelief, there was now a considerable Jewish population living in their midst, almost without restriction. The preachers began to call attention to the fact from their pulpits. In April 1511, at an open-air pulpit in the Campo S. Polo, Fra Rufin Lovato preached an inflammatory sermon against the Jews, recommending his audience to put their homes to sack. The unfortunate refugees huddled together, fearing attack; and the principal among them went to the Council of Ten to complain of this menace. Rufin was warned, and the other preachers as well; but nevertheless it seems that his intransigeant attitude had some influence on the

government. The lead was taken by the *Avogadori di Comun*,[6] egged on by Sier Zuan Trevisan. At their instigation, on April the 8th, proclamation was made on the Rialto for all of the Jewish refugees to depart from Venice within the space of one month. In the meantime, they were to be rigidly confined to their houses, which they were permitted to leave for only a couple of hours each day. Exception was made only in favor of one or two representatives from each district, who were empowered to go about to make the necessary arrangements on behalf of the others. After the time limit had elapsed, the only Jews who were to be allowed to remain were the licensed bankers and other persons possessing a special privilege. In the meantime, the Jews were taken under the protection of the government, all molestation of them being strictly forbidden.

The results of this order were made nugatory by a fortunate occurrence. Less than a fortnight later, a certain priest was condemned to death for murder by the Council of Ten. The *Avogadori di Comun*, who had been responsible for the measure against the Jews, unconstitutionally endeavored to prevent the execution of this sentence. The Council of Ten was furious. Coöpting seven other magistrates, it decided on the same day to notify the *Avogadori* that they were no longer worthy of their office, from which they were summarily dismissed. They were fortunate that they escaped outlawry. They were even excluded for the following two years from all voice in the Council. Thus their authority was

[6] Public Prosecutors.

absolutely annihilated. Their successors in office seem to have been more sympathetic toward the Jews, or else entirely overlooked the edict of a couple of weeks earlier. There would indeed have been nowhere for the exiles to go, their original homes on the mainland being in some cases closed to them, and in others still in ruins. At all events, no more was heard about the edict of expulsion proclaimed so ostentatiously a short time previous, and Jewish life and activities continued to go on as before.

The most prominent Jew in the city at this period was a certain Anselmo del Banco (or, as he was known in Jewish circles, Rabbi Asher Meshullam, the brother of Hayim Meshullam of Padua), a man noted for his wealth, his liberality and his patronage of Hebrew literature.[7] It is he who may be reckoned the founder of the Jewish community at Venice. On all recent occasions, he had acted as the spokesman of his coreligionists. The bank which he controlled, transferred presumably from Mestre, was the most important in the city. He had business interests in Portobuffolè, Montagnana, Crema, and half a dozen other places throughout the Venetian territory; his name occurs repeatedly in contemporary records for the magnitude of his transactions. His son Jacob, a dealer in precious stones, was a familiar figure in the houses of patricians, and continually getting into trouble on one account or another. The Jewish

[7] It may be mentioned, among Anselmo del Banco's other titles to distinction, that he was one of the ancestors of the Warburg family of Hamburg, London, and New York.

bankers seem to have represented to the government an absolutely inexhaustible source of wealth, and recourse was continually made to them during the course of the war for loans and levies. This was the secret of their toleration. From 1503 to 1616, they were forced to oblige the government with a total of at least 60,000 ducats, in addition to their annual tax of 10,000. This was quite apart from ordinary taxation and their share in paying customs dues. The total of their contribution to the State in this short period cannot have amounted to less than a quarter of a million ducats.

Not that they always submitted uncomplainingly to the requisitions made upon them. In May, 1512, an attempt was made to wring from them the enormous sum of 10,000 ducats. On this occasion they flatly refused to pay, on the ground of impossibility; and seven of them, including Anselmo del Banco, were imprisoned until the following November in the hope of inducing them to take a wiser view of the situation. As usual, brute force won the day, and they gave what was asked. However, shortly after their release, Anselmo and his colleague Abraham had public proclamation made on their behalf on the Rialto to the effect that they proposed to give up business on account of the excessive payments which they were forced to make. The threat was perhaps never meant seriously, but it provided the government with a reminder of the inevitable result of a policy of extortion. This does not seem to have been entirely lacking in effect, there being a temporary slackening in the demands which were made. In

1515, however, in view of the pressing financial needs of the State, the Jews received an opportunity of widening their economic activities. For them to have engaged in the sale of new commodities would have been opposed not only by the merchants but also by the artisans, as an infringement upon a Christian prerogative. However, in return for a loan of 5,000 ducats, they were formally permitted to open nine shops for dealing in secondhand goods (*strazzaria* as it was called). This privilege was to continue for three years. In the following year, in consideration of a payment of 100 ducats and a loan of a further 400, the opening of a tenth establishment of the sort was authorized. These shops were all situated in the commercial center of the town, upon the Rialto bridge.

During the whole of this period, the tide of feeling against the Jews was rising. It was felt that they were in the city under false pretenses; that they had never been formally admitted, and that they had no right to remain now that the immediate danger on the mainland was past. Contrary to the laws of the Republic, they had even established synagogues, where public worship was regularly held. The preachers from their pulpits insinuated that it was to this scandal that the present woes of the State and its continual travail in war were preponderantly due.

At Eastertide, when they had never previously dared to set foot in Venice, they were seen everywhere about the city, especially in the parishes of S. Casciano, S. Agostino, S. Polo, and S. Maria

Materdomini. Some of them, physicians by profession, were monopolizing medical practice, and attracting a good deal of attention by their conduct. In 1515, in his Easter sermons, Fra Giovanni Maria d'Arezzo preached against the Jews, advising the confiscation of all that they possessed. The government on its side realized that they were necessary to the State through the exigencies of war. However, there was a growing feeling that they should at least be segregated and put under control, as had been suggested, though never executed, on more than one previous occasion, many years before.

On April 22, 1515, the first step was taken, when Zorzi Emo, at a meeting of the *Pregadi*[7a], suggested that the Jews should all be sent to live on the *Giudecca*—the island where, according to report, the original Jewish merchants from the Levant had established themselves, centuries before. Anselmo del Banco and other bankers immediately waited upon the *Savi* on behalf of their coreligionists to protest against the proposal. The *Giudecca*—where the barracks for the mercenary troops were situated—

[7a] i. e. the Senate, so termed as being invited to consultation. Its powers were principally elective and legislative. Executive authority rested in the hands of a smaller body, which proposed measures for the consideration of the *Pregadi*. This was known as the *Collegio*, and was composed of the Doge and other important functionaries. Included in the latter were the six *Savi Grandi*, who acted as responsible Ministers of State, the five *Savi a Terra Ferma*, superintending internal affairs, and the five *Savi da Mar*, virtually the Board of Admiralty. On urgent matters, however, an increasing authority came to be exercised by the notorious Council of Ten. Titularly, supreme authority resided in the aristocratic Great Council (*Maggior Consiglio*), which was the basis of the Venetian constitution.

was, they said, too dangerous; and, if any such step were necessary, they would prefer to be sent to Murano. The choice was a subtle one, for the latter island was then reckoned the garden of Venice and was famous, not only for its glass manufacture, but also for the sumptuous patrician villas latterly erected upon it. For the moment, the proposal was allowed to stand over.

In the following year, however—as usual, at Eastertide—the matter was again raised. At a meeting of the *Collegio*, held on March 20th, Zacaria Dolfin, one of the *Savi*, arose and complained about the current treatment of the Jews in the city. It was essential that they should be segregated and prevented from contaminating Christian citizens any longer by their neighborhood. For the object in view, he suggested the New Foundry (*Ghetto Nuovo*), in the parish of S. Girolamo, in the north of the city. It was an island, cut off on all sides by canals, and almost fortresslike in character. Were it surrounded by a wall and provided with drawbridges and patrolled at night by boats—naturally, at the expense of the Jews—it would be an ideal spot for the purpose. The Doge and some of the Councillors greeted the proposal enthusiastically. The owners of the houses in the place designated appeared to be willing enough, though the tenants were none too desirous of being uprooted from their homes. Anselmo del Banco and some of his principal colleagues were sent for and told what it was intended to do. Their opposition to the proposal was intense. Above all, they pleaded, it

would be dangerous. At present, they could count upon the Christian gentlemen amongst whom they lived as well as the guards at the Rialto for protection in case of necessity. Under the new conditions, they would be utterly isolated and absolutely open to attack in the event of any disturbance. Moreover, it was not long since the Council had promised that no change would be made in their present treatment. On the strength of this promise, the *strazzaiuoli* (or dealers in secondhand commodities, recently licensed) had spent large sums in setting up their shops in the Rialto, and they would now be faced with ruin. Many of the Jews would rather leave Venice than submit to such treatment, to the manifest loss of the public treasury and of Anselmo himself, who had assumed responsibility for the sums which they were to pay in taxes. The only fair procedure was, to wait until the Venetian territories on the *terra ferma* were recovered, when the refugees would be able to return to their homes—excepting to Mestre, which was still in ruins.

When the Jewish deputation had left, the matter was again discussed. The general opinion remained unaltered. Dolfin, the originator of the scheme, was keener than ever, and proposed that the matter should be brought before the Senate for definite decision at the earliest opportunity. On March 29th, this was done, at the motion of Dolfin and Francesco Bragadin. The proposal was carried at a preliminary ballot by 113 votes to 48, with one abstention, and finally by 130 votes to 44, with eight abstentions, upon the following day. Thus it passed into law.

On April 1st, proclamation was made at the Rialto and on the bridges throughout the city, especially in the quarters where the Jews were living, for the execution of the new measure. Only ten days were allowed for it to be carried into effect. When the *Signoria* attended service in S. Marco immediately afterwards, the preacher congratulated them publicly upon their wise and truly religious decision.

Even now, the Jews did not give up the struggle. On April 5th, Anselmo appeared once again before the authorities to complain. Once more he urged that the promise given to the *strazzaiuoli* so recently ought not to be broken. In any case, the place designated was not large enough for the number of persons who would be forced to live there, which he estimated at 700. Many would be forced to leave the city; and he himself, being responsible for their obligations to the State, would be the principal sufferer. In consequence of this complaint, three of the *Collegio* were sent to visit the Ghetto and make a report. The result must have been satisfactory. Nothing was done to remedy matters, and those for whom no room was found had no choice but to emigrate, as many did. Hence, on April 10th, 1516—the day, as it happened, after the feast of Pentecost—the Jews of Venice had to transfer themselves, men, women and children, to their new enforced place of residence; and the first Ghetto, which set the name and the example for all those which disgraced Italy down almost to our own days, was founded.

The idea of the segregation of the Jews in a

quarter by themselves was not a new one. In all ages, gentile aversion and Hebrew solidarity has resulted in this same phenomenon, which began long before it was prescribed by law and continued after freedom of residence became general. Officially, the idea had its inception in the Christian world in a canon of the Third Lateran Council of 1179, which forbade Jews and Christians to dwell together. This was, indeed, enforced only irregularly. In many places, the Jews continued to live scattered throughout the city or non-Jews had no compunction in keeping their houses in the midst of the Jewry. The places where there existed a formal Jewish quarter, enforced by law, and shut off from the rest of the city, were in a small minority. Least of all was the regulation obeyed in Italy, under the eye of the Popes and in close neighborhood of their own example, more tolerant by far in fact than in theory. Venice was, indeed, more distinguished by its zeal in matters of faith. In the *condotta* of 1385, instructions had been given that some place should be found where the Jews could live apart from the Christian population. This clause had been repeated in 1390. Nothing, however, appears to have been done to enforce this proviso; and the Jews remained scattered about the city, living at that time especially in the parishes of S. Silvestro and S. Agostino.

The district now chosen for their residence was situated in a marshy and insalubrious quarter at the extremity of the city furthest removed from S. Marco. Here, many years before, there had been established a cannon foundry (*geto*, or *ghetto*), as

was long recorded by a stone ball which was to be seen over the gateway.[8] At a later period, as it seems, this had been enlarged by a further addition, the *Corte delle Calli*, otherwise known as the *Ghetto Nuovo*, or New Ghetto. It was this, which was in the shape of a large square, that was henceforth reserved for the residence of the Jews.

Before the new quarter was ready for habitation, certain alterations had to be carried out. The *Ghetto Nuovo* was in form an island, cut off entirely from the rest of the city by canals. Around it, there were to be constructed high walls, so as to prevent all unauthorized entrance and egress. With the same object, all of the windows facing outwards were to be bricked up. In the wall, two gateways were to be made, one towards the bridge which gave access to the *Ghetto Vecchio*, as yet a Christian quarter, and the other at the opposite extremity

[8] The etymology of the word Ghetto has long figured among the problems of Jewish history. It has been variously derived from the Hebrew גט (bill of divorce), the Syriac עדה (community), the Greek *γείτων*, *γειτονία* (neighborhood), the Tuscan *Guitto* (Modenese *Ghitto*) (sordid), the German *Geheckte Orte* ('Hedged Place') through the Latin *Gehectus*, the Italian diminutive *Borghetto* ('little burgh'), not to mention a number of other more fantastic suggestions. The solution of the problem is however put beyond all doubt by the fact that the *Ghetto Nuovo* was inhabited by the Jews before the *Ghetto Vecchio*. It is obvious therefore that the derivation of the word is absolutely unconnected with anything Jewish, and must be looked for in Venetian antiquities. The name as applied to the Venetian foundry in this neighborhood dates back at least as early as 1306. From Venice, the term spread throughout Italy, where the word Ghetto came to be recognized as the official appellation of any legally instituted Jewish quarter. Outside Italy, the use of the term for any place where Jews congregate is largely metaphorical.

towards the church of S. Girolamo. These gates were to be put under the charge of four Christian watchmen (paid at the expense of the Jewish community), who were to see that they were closed at night and were to prevent any person from going in or out at unauthorized hours. Provision was also made for two boats, each manned by a crew of three besides one of the watchmen, which had to patrol the neighboring canals with the same object. Ever since 1423, the Jews had been prohibited from owning any real estate in Venice. It was therefore impossible for them to purchase the houses to which they were to be confined. Hence they had to take over as a body all of the property in their new quarter on what was in effect a perpetual lease, at a rental one third higher than that which the landlords had previously received. It is no wonder that the latter were enthusiastically in favor of the new proposals.

For some time after, the authorities were kept busy settling minor matters connected with the translocation. A petition was presented by the Jews requesting that they should be allowed to leave one or two caretakers to sleep at night in their banks and shops on the Rialto. This was refused, and they were instructed to engage Christians for the purpose. Arrangements were made for the appointment of the four gatekeepers and the six men who were to man the patrol boats. Much inconvenience having been threatened by the segregation of the Jewish physicians, they were empowered to stay outside the Ghetto at night for urgent purposes, or for consultations with their colleagues, on showing suffi-

cient reason. A cesspool was made, there having hitherto been no such provision for the health of the inhabitants. At the end of 1516, for the purpose of the recovery of Verona (where they had important business interests), the Jews consented to make a loan of 10,000 ducats to the government. In return for this, they extorted certain concessions. The number of gatekeepers was reduced, for the sake of economy, from four to two; certain structural improvements were authorized; and the gates of the Ghetto were allowed to remain open a little later in the evening. Subsequently, in return for further financial assistance, the expensive and useless patrol of boats round the Ghetto was discontinued.

In the meantime, by the Treaty of Noyon (December, 1516), peace had been restored on the mainland. The original cause for the authorization of the Jewish settlement in Venice thus disappeared. Popular opinion, which had never been altogether favorable, became more and more antagonistic to these unwelcome guests. Attention was called to them in the spring of 1518 by the eloquent sermons preached at S. Marco by a Spanish convert named Geronimo. In the Lent of the following year, Fra Giovanni, of Florence, attacked them ruthlessly in his sermons at the Frari, the famous Franciscan church, asserting that their present treatment was too mild and that they should be dealt with more severely. An attempt was made to purchase his silence with gifts, but this injudicious action merely added fuel to the flames. Meanwhile, the *condotta* of three years previous had expired. The *Savi* proposed that it should be renewed

on similar terms, upon the payment of a tribute of 8,000 ducats, excepting that the privilege of exercising *strazzaria* was to be withheld. Long and excited debates took place upon the question. A few persons held that the new restriction which limited competition was contrary to the interests of the State, quite apart from the fact that additional sums might accrue to the treasury were it granted. The body of opinion was however unfavorable to the whole proposal. Peace was restored on the mainland, and there was no reason for tolerating the Jews in the city any longer. The few individuals who were willing to agree to the proposals insisted upon the harshest conditions. Orator after orator pointed to the example of Spain and Portugal, which had expelled the Jews and had been blessed by Heaven in consequence. The body of opinion seemed to be in favor of relegating the Jews to Mestre, as had been the case before the war, and increasing the tribute. It was in vain that the government spokesman, Antonio Grimani, an old man of eighty-six, reminded the audience that the Jews were necessary to the poor of the city, since no *Monte di Pietà* existed to relieve their needs. No member of the council would rise to support this view, for fear of being suspected of corruption. Marino Sanuto, the diarist, no favorer of the Jews, was furious, although he had no means of expressing his indignation publicly. Much of the opposition, he was convinced, was hypocritical, coming as it did from persons who, but for the presence of competition, would readily lend money on the Rialto at forty or even fifty per cent. The trade of

the city was stagnant, distress was rife, and the exclusion of the Jews would do much to make conditions worse. From June 1519, the question was debated time after time in a heated atmosphere, but no proposal obtained upon ballot the requisite majority. Meanwhile, the time limit of the past *condotta* was running out, and the Jewish bankers began to make arrangements for winding up their affairs. At last, on March 15th, estimates for work at the Arsenal were presented before the Senate. The requirements were urgent, and a fresh levy of extraordinary severity would be necessary to meet the expense. The Senators looked at one another in dismay; such calls on their pockets were not popular, and the present one came as an unpleasant surprise. At last, someone had an inspiration. Let the Jews be admitted for five years, upon the same conditions as in the past, and the annual tribute of 10,000 ducats obtained from them could be devoted to the Arsenal, making fresh taxation unnecessary. The proposal was greeted enthusiastically. All opposition was overborne, and, upon ballot, a sweeping majority was easily obtained.

Anselmo del Banco and his associates were immediately informed of the fresh conditions upon which they might continue their affairs in the city. They looked grave. The amount demanded, they said, was excessive; and they asked for time to confer with their associates on the mainland. They were told that this was impossible, and that they had to give their decision at once. This was soon done. "When will conflicts with power," said

Anselmo pithily, "power comes out uppermost." On May 2nd, a first instalment of 4,000 ducats was paid, and the Jews recommenced their business, both in their banks and in the *strazzarie*. The atmosphere which prevailed in the city with regard to them utterly changed. When a certain friar who had been stirring up religious prejudices at Padua arrived in Venice, he was immediately warned not to attempt to preach. In the Senate, a person who began to speak against the Jews was shouted down.

Their position in the city nevertheless remained precarious. It was obvious that they were tolerated only on account of their utility to the treasury. The calls upon their purse continued without intermission, notwithstanding all of their protests; and it was as much as they could do to win slight concessions from the government in return for complying with its demands. In 1525, the *condotta* was renewed without much difficulty.

The enemies of the Jews, however, were but awaiting an opportunity for action. On March 18th, 1527, Gabriel Moro, a knight, one of the *Savi a terra ferma*, made a fiery speech against them in the Senate, and proposed that they should be driven out of the city for good. It was in vain that Zaccharia Trevisan pointed out that this would be a manifest breach of faith. After three ballots, the motion received the requisite majority, and was accordingly declared carried. Proclamation was immediately made to the effect that, on the conclusion of the present agreement, all the Jews should go back to Mestre, lending at interest being henceforth strictly

forbidden in Venice, as it had been from time immemorial; while any individual whose business brought him to the city should be admitted only for a very limited period and under strictly regulated conditions. A few days later, Moro attempted to bring forward an even more sweeping proposal, but was prevented. However, it was not long before it was realized that this policy of exclusion was an economic blunder. It was a year of great scarcity. The price of corn was high, and distress general. The Jews, besieged for loans, refused resolutely to do business, saying that their obligations were at an end. Meanwhile, the treasury was empty, and the only expedient which could be proposed to fill it was a forced loan. At last, in November, after some months of chaffering, the Jews gained the day, the edict of expulsion being rescinded and certain minor privileges being granted in return for a loan of 10,000 ducats. In September, 1528, the *condotta* was confirmed for a further period of four years. The extraordinary demands, however, did not cease. In March, 1532, an ultimatum was presented, ordering the Jews to oblige the State with a further 10,000 ducats or else to leave the city. Naturally enough, they demurred. A certain Consiglio, who had succeeded Anselmo del Banco (who had long been an invalid) at the head of the community, went to the ducal palace to communicate the opinions of his coreligionists. The Doge was furious, suggesting that it was a privilege to assist the Republic, and that the Jews should have come to offer a loan spontaneously. "Your Grace was in such a hurry that we did not have

the opportunity," replied Consiglio, courteously. The *Collegio* burst into laughter at the witty reply, and the further conduct of negotiations was simplified. Ultimately, a compromise was reached; and, in the following September, the *condotta* was renewed on much the same terms as usual. For forty years to come, the Jewish settlement was never seriously questioned.

The Jewish settlers for whom the Ghetto was originally founded hailed, in the main, more or less directly from Germany. The names of some of them whom we have met are in themselves sufficient indication of this. They followed the German rite of service in their prayers. Several works in German, in Hebrew characters, were even printed at Venice at this period. Down to the period of the decline of the community they continued to predominate in numbers, if not in wealth and in importance. Included amongst them there were inevitably some persons whose ancestors had been established in Italy for many generations, and who followed the Italian rite in worship. Ultimately, these were sufficiently numerous to organize their own congregation and synagogue; though, as a matter of fact, it always felt the competition of its rivals very strongly, and had to take special measures in order to secure the attendance of visitors from the mainland who followed the same rite. This differentiation, however, was one of minor religious usage. Politically, the 'Italian' Jews received no recognition. In consequence, as long as the distinction by place

of origin was kept up in Venice, they continued to be included amongst the German 'nation'.

It was only the official Jewish community, obliged by the terms of their *condotta* to maintain the loan banks for the benefit of the poor, which was confined in the *Ghetto Nuovo* in 1516. The Jewish merchants from the Levant, whose presence in the city antedated that of the others by some centuries, remained just as they had been previously, sharing none of the special burdens which were incumbent upon the others and living about the city as they pleased. It was a condition of affairs which was hopelessly illogical; for the Levantine Jews were assuredly quite as much, or as little, a menace to the faith, as their German or Italian brethren. On the other hand, their value to the city was far too great to justify their utter exclusion. Accordingly, on June 2nd, 1541, it was determined that they should be segregated, like their coreligionists. There was no room in the *Ghetto Nuovo*. Hence it was determined to find accommodation for them in the adjoining *Ghetto Vecchio*, the Old Foundry. The gate which separated the two sections was removed, and a fresh entrance to the now enlarged Jewish quarter was constructed on the *Fondamenta della Pescaria*, near the old fish market and facing the Cannaregio canal, where it is still to be seen.

Though henceforth they lived together, the two elements were not by any means assimilated to one another. Their treatment remained utterly different, the Levantines being more favored by far. They remained under the control of the *Cinque Savi alla*

Mercanzia, whereas the others were subject to the *Sopraconsoli*. They retained their separate corporate existence. They were not obliged to share in the burdens of the others. They were not indeed allowed to engage in the occupations permitted to their less fortunate brethren—pawnbroking and dealing in old clothes. But, on the other hand, their right to engage in foreign commerce, which was all that they desired, was expressly confirmed. The maximum limit of residence allowed to them as visitors was fixed at four months, afterwards increased to two years. For some time, the segregation of the two sections in their respective quarters was strictly enforced, both by the government and by the Jewish authorities, who were collectively responsible for the rental of the houses. Thus in 1586, when a tide of emigration set in from the *Ghetto Nuovo* to the Levantine quarter, the leaders of the German community intervened with a fulmination of spiritual penalties, the reverberations of which reached the ears of Rabbi Moses Isserles, in distant Cracow. This did not seem to have much effect, as in 1609 the civil authorities had to intervene to force the German Jews back into their own overcrowded quarter. In 1633, however, in view of the continuous immigration, arrangements were made for a small addition to the Ghetto towards the northeast; the community giving an assurance, under a penalty of 2,000 ducats, that at least twenty new families would arrive within the year to justify this additional accommodation. This fresh extension became known as the *Ghetto Nuovissimo*.

Meanwhile, a fresh element had made its appearance to add to the heterogeneous composition of the Venetian community. On the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula at the close of the fifteenth century, there had remained behind large numbers of the so-called Marranos—Jews by blood and by conviction, but Christians in name, who were subjected to merciless persecution by the Inquisition for their secret fidelity to the religion of their fathers. Despite the vigilance of the government, these lost no opportunity of making their escape to some country where they could revert to open Judaism without fear. From the earliest moment, Venice had offered peculiar attractions to them. As early as 1497, they had settled there in such numbers that the attention of the government was attracted, and they were without exception expelled. The succeeding period witnessed the establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal, leading to the general flight of all who had the conviction and the ability; and many of the refugees inevitably settled in Venice. They aroused in an exaggerated degree the animosity of the general population. Like all immigrants, they tended to crowd together, their way of life being regarded as dirty and insanitary. They continued to pay lip service to Christianity, and so could not be relegated to the Ghetto. On the other hand, their sincerity was very rightly suspect; and they were a far greater threat to the orthodoxy of the general population (whom they were accused of suborning to their beliefs) than their more candid brethren. They were accused, too,

whether rightly or wrongly, of engaging in usury and other forbidden professions. For some time, measures against them were discussed. It was generally believed that some three hundred at least, in view of the great services which they could render to the city, might be allowed to remain. However, the Emperor Charles V, zealous for the Catholic faith and filled with an unreasoning resentment against these heretical fugitives from his dominions, threw his influence into the scales on the other side. Accordingly, by a decree of the Senate of July 8th, 1550, it was ordered that all 'Marranos' should be compelled to leave the city within a period of two months; while Venetian citizens were henceforth forbidden to maintain commercial relations with them. A month later, the Censors were empowered to collaborate with the Inquisition in inquiring into the orthodoxy of the Spanish and Portuguese immigrants and deciding which should be comprised under the heading of Marranos and which should not.

This provision shows the difficulty which there was in purging the city. Evasion was encouraged moreover by the triumphant episode at just about this period when João Miguez, *alias* Joseph Nasi, and later Duke of Naxos, succeeded in securing the release of his aunt, Gracia Mendes, who had been arrested at Venice as a suspect. Internal, external and economic considerations fostered the movement. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the greatest center of Marrano immigration was the city of Ferrara, then under the benevolent rule of the house of Este. It was here that the first of the great

Marrano congregations of Europe sprang up, and that the printing of Spanish and Portuguese literature in the vernacular began. In 1580, however, a reaction set in. The community was broken up, many of its members were imprisoned, and the most heroic were sent to Rome, to die the death of martyrs. Henceforth, Venice superseded Ferrara as the great haven of refuge for the Marranos, who came there in increasing numbers to reënter the faith of their fathers. The government, taught some measure of tolerance with the lapse of years, began to connive in their settlement, provided only that they gave up their life of pretext and went to live in the Ghetto, wearing the distinctive badge, like other Jews. For this liberal attitude, they were able to avail themselves of the example of a whole succession of the Renaissance Popes, before the Catholic reaction had warped the papal view. They were more swayed, however, by economic than by spiritual considerations. If the Marranos had not been allowed to remain in Venice, they would have gone on further East, and it was considered preferable that the Republic should put up with a little backsliding rather than witness these potentially valuable acquisitions carry their wealth and abilities to enrich the Grand Turk.

There existed, indeed, at Venice a tribunal of the Inquisition which was supposed to watch over the purity of the faith. The *Serenissima* was, however, none too submissive to the Holy See in such matters. The Inquisition was allowed to carry on a somewhat restrained activity, but it could inflict no penalties

other than reconciliation and imprisonment. When at the beginning of the seventeenth century there took place the famous quarrel between the Papacy and the Republic of Venice (in which Fra Paolo Sarpi, at the risk of his life, strenuously upheld the supremacy of the civil power), the authority of the Holy Office in Venice was still further restricted. Sarpi himself, indeed, regarded the baptism of the Marranos' first Christian ancestors as invalid, because carried out under force or menace; and he consequently questioned the claim of the Inquisition to any authority at all in such matters. It therefore became more and more powerless, excepting in the case of those persons who retained their disguise of Christianity and were thus a real danger to the faith. In the course of the second half of the sixteenth century, the local tribunal had the satisfaction of trying approximately twenty Marranos for Judaizing. In the course of the next hundred and twenty years, only half that number of cases came before it —the majority being accusations which did not lead to any prosecution.

In the meantime, the characteristics of the Marranos had to some extent changed. From hapless fugitives, fleeing penniless from the persecution of the Inquisition, they tended to comprise an increasing number of prosperous merchants, who had made a solid position for themselves in the Peninsula and now desired to transfer their capital and their businesses to some place where they might worship the God of their fathers in peace. They were immigrants of a sort which might bring prosperity to any

State, and which any wise government would set itself to attract. When in 1589 Daniel Rodriguez, himself a Jew of Peninsular origin, was engaged in his attempt to revive the trade of the Republic through the medium of a new Free Port at Spalato, in Dalmatia, a considerable number of Spanish and Portuguese Jews were authorized, through his intervention, to establish themselves in Venice for the purpose of trade. They were sent to join the Levantine Jews in the *Ghetto Vecchio*, enjoying the same privileges and immunities as the latter and subjected to the same prohibition against engaging in any occupation other than wholesale commerce. Subsequently, they were included in the periodical *condotta* of the Levantine Jews, with whom their position was assimilated in almost every respect. Thus there came into existence a third 'nation'—the Ponentine (Western) as it was called, by the side of the Levantine and the German already established.

The opportunities thus given were not neglected by them. The tribunals of the Inquisition in the Peninsula and elsewhere were kept busy hearing the denunciations brought by scandalized Catholics newly returned from Italy. "There are many Portuguese Jews with their red hats in the Ghetto, who in Portugal were Christian priests," alleged a Venetian ecclesiastic before the local tribunal; but it was forced to remain inactive. Portuguese became almost as common in the Ghetto as Italian. The aristocratic crests of hidalgo families began to appear upon the tombstones in the ancient cemetery on the Lido, accompanied by stately Spanish epi-

taphs. Sometimes bodies were brought here even from as far off as France, so that they might be buried in a Jewish environment even if they had not had the fortune to live in one. Portuguese sermons were delivered in the synagogues, and vernacular literature for the benefit of immigrants who knew no Hebrew poured out from the printing presses. Persons of Spanish or Portuguese origin who had been living elsewhere in Italy as Catholics of unsuspected orthodoxy suddenly made their appearance in Venice, where they entered the covenant of Abraham and took up their residence in the Ghetto. A score of notable names may be mentioned in this connection. There was Elijah Montalto, a doughty polemist, subsequently body physician to the Queen of France; Solomon Usque, *alias* Duarte de Pinel, the first modern Jewish playwright; Immanuel Aboab, who indulged in considerable literary activity at Venice in the course of an epic career which he began as a baptized Christian at Oporto and ended in an odor of sanctity in Jerusalem; Dr. Antonio Dias Pinto, who suddenly gave up his seat upon the *Ruota*, or Ecclesiastical Court, in Tuscany to revert to Judaism; Fernando (Isaac) Cardoso, formerly physician to the royal court in Spain, who subsequently retired to Verona, where he composed his *Excellencias dos Hebreos*, a classic of Jewish apologetical literature; the latter's amorous brother Abraham (Miguel), who ended his career as a Messianic prophet in the course of a domestic quarrel, while acting as body physician to the Pasha of Egypt; Rodrigo Mendes da Silva, historiographer

royal to the court of Spain, who charmed contemporaries by his style, shocked them by his freedom of thought, and became converted to Judaism when he was over seventy years of age. These are only a few of the most salient amongst these incredible figures who brought Venetian Jewry into constant touch with the most romantic current in the whole of Jewish history.

Over a considerable period the Portuguese congregation at Venice, which went by the name of *Talmud Torah* (Study of the Law), enjoyed the primacy in the Marrano world. The mark which it left was very considerable. In the interval between the cessation of the vernacular press at Ferrara and its foundation in Amsterdam, it was at Venice that the Spanish translations of the liturgy and other works were published for the benefit of those who had been brought up in ignorance of Hebrew. It sent out spiritual leaders in every quarter. It was thence that David Nieto went by way of Leghorn, to act as spiritual leader of the nascent community of London, and that Saul Levi Morteira and Isaac Pardo went to guide that of Amsterdam. When the latter was founded, it took the regulations of the *K. K. Talmud Torah* of Venice as the model of its own; while, a few years later, those of London were in turn copied from those of the parent congregation in Holland. Thus, in the end, the organization of the Marrano community of Venice had a considerable effect upon all those of the Old World and the New. In internal affairs, the Ponentine community soon attained a supremacy over the other two. The Germans might

excel them in numbers, and the Levantines in learning, but the Portuguese were by far the wealthiest, the best endowed with general culture, and the most influential in the outside world. In the general council of the community, which was restricted to those who paid a minimum amount of taxation, its representatives easily outnumbered those of the other two put together. Its synagogue was the largest, and the most splendidly adorned; and it served as the official place of worship upon special occasions. Today, the Ponentine community, the youngest of them all, has virtually absorbed the other two.

It was some time before the three 'nations' became welded into one. For purposes of religious worship, indeed, they always remained separate, each maintaining its own synagogue, or synagogues, in which divine worship was conducted according to its own ritual—German, Italian, Levantine, or Portuguese. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, a corporate organization had come into existence for the regulation of matters of common interest. Excepting for this, the different bodies remained separate. It was not until some years had elapsed that the Levantine and Ponentine 'nations' were made to share in the galling burdens which had hitherto been borne by their German brethren alone, while not until the community had begun to decay was the differentiation among the various sections entirely abolished, so that one *condotta* was issued for the whole of Venetian Jewry. Well before the close of the sixteenth century, however, the last of

the heterogeneous elements of which the community was composed had been admitted. Meanwhile, Venice had come to play an increasingly important part in the Hebrew world, and had witnessed some of the most dramatic events in contemporary Jewish history.

CHAPTER III

THE HEYDAY OF THE COMMUNITY

At the beginning of 1524, a vessel which had come from Alexandria by way of Crete with passengers and goods cast anchor at Venice, and Romance disembarked. The outward guise which she assumed was unwonted—that of a diminutive shriveled specimen of humanity, swarthy hued and raven haired, dressed in flowing robes after the Oriental style and feeble from voluntary undernourishment. He was followed, as he landed, by black looks from his fellow passengers, for they alleged that his servant Joseph had been systematically pilfering their food during the course of the voyage. No such charge could, however, be levied against the master, for he was abstemious to a degree, and would not eat anything that had passed through gentile hands or had been cooked in their pots. The stranger was taken on shore by the ship captain, who found him a room at home. His first preoccupation was to set about a series of fasts, which lasted (according to his own account) for six days and six nights. During this period, the only luxury which he allowed himself was that of prayer, in which he indulged extravagantly. Meanwhile, his attendant, whose tastes lay in a different direction, had gone to see the sights of the city.

On the last day of his self-imposed affliction, as he

was finishing his prayers, the little man found that there was a stranger in the room. It was a young Venetian Jew, whose acquaintance Joseph had made, and whom he had brought home to observe the curious phenomenon which his employer undoubtedly presented. A short conversation ensued in Hebrew, which was the only common medium of communication. Soon after, the visitor returned accompanied by Moses of Castelazzo, an artist and portrait painter, who a few years before had received from the *Signoria* a copyright for his illustrations to the Pentateuch. The ascetic stranger received him benignly, and promptly endeavored to borrow seven ducats. The painter, instead of hurting the other's feelings by a refusal, took him to his house in the Ghetto, where he sent for the leaders of the community to come and meet him. To them the stranger unfolded a marvelous tale: how he was named David, son of Solomon, of the tribe of Reuben, which was still to be found living a warlike and independent life in the (mythical) wilderness of Chabor; and how he had been sent by his brother, King Joseph, and the seventy elders of the tribe to seek assistance from the Pope and the various potentates of Europe—particularly in the form of munitions—to assist in their constant warfare against the Turk. He had a circumstantial account to give of his journey from his native place by way of Palestine, where he had prayed at the tombs of the Patriarchs.

The truth underlying this story, of which vague rumors had already reached the shores of Italy,

is difficult to fathom. According to one plausible recent hypothesis, Reubeni was merely giving a slightly embroidered account of conditions amongst the Jews of Cochin on the Malabar coast in India, where the state of affairs at that time was not very different from his picture. However that may be, the tale made a visible impression. Recent tribulations had made the whole Jewish world look forward with redoubled eagerness to the promised deliverance. As recently as 1502, a certain Asher Lemmlein had appeared close by, at Capo d'Istria, and announced the approaching arrival of the Redeemer. Pious Jews had believed in his prophecy so implicitly that they had destroyed their Passover ovens, in the confidence that they would never be required again. The prophet had disappeared almost as suddenly as he had arisen, but the impression which he had created still remained. The present surprising revelation of the continued independent existence of some at least of the lost Ten Tribes revived and strengthened past hopes, and all of the floating Messianic expectations of Venetian Jewry became keyed up to an extreme degree. A certain Mazliah set about collecting the amount that the stranger required. Moses of Castelazzo succeeded in prevailing upon him to leave the ship captain's house and to accept hospitality in the Ghetto. Simoneto, the worthy son of Anselmo del Banco, offered to defray the expenses of his journey to Rome, where he was to interview the Pope, and sent a couple of men with him as an escort. On Friday, February 5th, 1524, Reubeni set out by sea to Pesaro, on his way

to the headquarters of the Catholic faith, accompanied by the prayers and the hopes of the whole Venetian community.

Thus there began one of the most dramatic episodes in the whole span of Jewish history. At Rome, the pretender rode on a white horse to the Vatican. Here he was received in audience by Pope Clement VII, who gave him letters of introduction to the various potentates of Europe. Thereafter, all of the wealth and culture of the Jewish community lay at his feet. He was lavishly supplied with money. When he rode through the streets, he was accompanied by more than two hundred Christians, as well as his regular escort of ten Jews. Doña Benvenida Abrabanel sent him from Naples a silken banner embroidered with the Ten Commandments. At length, a formal invitation arrived from the king of Portugal, summoning Reubeni to his country. At the court of Almeirim, he was received with high honors, and a scheme was outlined to transport munitions of war to the Orient for the arming of the Jewish host.

Meanwhile, great enthusiasm was aroused amongst the Marranos, who flocked to Reubeni, much to his annoyance and disconcertment, under the belief that he was the Messiah. One of them, a promising young official named Diogo Pires, meeting with an initial rebuff, circumcised himself at the peril of his life in the hope that this would overcome the barrier. Subsequently he left the country, reverted to the Jewish name of Solomon Molcho, and became asso-

ciated with the other in an incredible career of romance capped with tragedy.

Molcho studied the Cabala in Salonica and Safed, aroused enthusiasm in the synagogues of Ancona by his eloquent preaching, sat at the gates of Rome amongst the beggars and the maimed in order to fulfill in his own person the rabbinical legend regarding the Messiah, gained the ear and favor of the Pope, but was ultimately forced to betake himself to Venice. Here he fell in once more with Reubeni, who had been compelled to leave Portugal through the excessive enthusiasm which his visit had aroused amongst the Marranos. He was now residing in luxury in the palace of some patrician, endeavoring to bring the government round to his views. The Senate was so far impressed as to have the tale investigated on its behalf by Giovambattista Ramusio, the noted traveler and linguist.

On this second encounter with Reubeni, Molcho began to feel somewhat disillusioned. He had come to suspect that the other's ignorance of rabbinic scholarship was only assumed, in order to give credibility to the pretence of being an envoy from one of the lost Ten Tribes who still lived a life based predominantly on the Bible. His own star, on the other hand, was in the ascendant by reason of recent achievements, especially by the punctual occurrence of the flood of the Tiber which he had foretold at Rome. He began, therefore, to play an increasingly prominent rôle. At Venice, he received enthusiastic support. Prominent amongst his up-

holders was Elijah Menahem Halfon, poet, Talmudist and physician, the most illustrious member of a distinguished family, who was one of the most fashionable medical practitioners in Venice at the time. This support cost Molcho dear.

Halfon had a professional rival, even more distinguished than himself, named Jacob Mantino, equally famous as philosopher and litterateur, who was at this time in attendance on half of the diplomatic corps in Venice. The rivalry between the two physicians was intense, and was continued in every sphere of their activity. Molcho endeavored to make peace between them, but in vain; and Jacob Mantino became his principal opponent. Clear-headed scientist and philosopher that he was, he refused to be carried away by the milleniary fever that affected his contemporaries almost to a man. He saw in Molcho's pretensions a grave menace to Jewry at large, accentuated by the fact that he was, technically, an apostate from Christianity. Convinced as he was, Mantino did not scruple as to the means to be employed in silencing the dangerous dreamer. He prevented Molcho from finding a publisher for his books, which had to be sent to the Orient to be printed, denounced him to the civil authorities as an apostate, and was even suspected, in the true spirit of the Italian renaissance, of trying to remove him by poison. Whether or not the accusation was true, it is a fact that Molcho was suddenly stricken down by a serious illness, and lay for some time at death's door.

On recovery, he went again to Rome. Here he had

been preceded by Mantino, who was now in medical attendance at the papal court. The latter pursued his vendetta relentlesly. He endeavored to secure the intervention of the Portuguese ambassador against the renegade, translated into Latin some of his writings into which, with some ingenuity, anti-Christian allusions might be read, and even went so far as to denounce him to the Inquisition. Molcho was condemned, and the sentence of death by burning was solemnly carried out on the Campo dei Fiori.

To the general astonishment, upon the next day he was seen walking about the Vatican as usual. It appears that Clement VII, in order to protect his favorite, had ordered the body of a condemned criminal to be burned in his stead. After this, it was obviously impossible for him to remain in Rome, whence the Pope sent him away by night under escort. In northern Italy, he fell in again with Reubeni. Henceforth the two adventurers worked in collaboration. Each seems to have become infected with something of the spirit of the other. Hearing that the Emperor Charles V was to meet a Diet of the Empire at Ratisbon, they traveled thither, bearing a banner inscribed with the Maccabean motto, in order to persuade him to call the Jews to arms against the Turk. The zealously Catholic ruler of half Europe, however, had neither the time nor the inclination to dabble in such schemes. The two were thrown into chains and dragged at his heels to Mantua, where Molcho was condemned, on a clear charge, by an extemporized Inquisitional tribunal. His strange, eventful story was at last ended by a

martyr's death. Reubeni escaped for a few years longer, but ultimately met a similar fate at an auto-da-fè in the Peninsula. The high hopes which had been surging through the community of Venice for some years past were finally dashed to the ground.

At this very period, by a strange twist of fate, the Venetian Ghetto had suddenly acquired a very considerable importance in current politics; and the eyes of the whole of Europe were fixed upon its Rabbis and its scholars for guidance in a matter which was to have a very great influence in shaping the destinies of mankind. Twenty years before, Henry VIII of England had been constrained from political reasons to marry the Infanta Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, and widow of his deceased brother, Arthur. Now, after a couple of decades of married life, whether led astray by the bright eyes of Anne Boleyn or actuated by a perfectly genuine desire to provide himself with an heir, he desired to have this marriage of such long standing annulled.[9] The Pope would no doubt have been ready to grant the favor, but for his fear of Catherine's nephew, the Emperor Charles V, who resented the slight placed upon his house. Thus, little by little, there spread that conflagration which was to end in the severance of England from its traditional allegiance to the Roman Church.

For Henry's desire, there was Biblical authority. In the book of Leviticus, indeed, marriage between a man and his deceased brother's wife appears to be

[9] The term *The Royal Divorce* as applied to this case, though common, is utterly misleading.

expressly forbidden. On the other hand, in the book of Deuteronomy it is expressly prescribed in the case of a childless match, in order that the dead man's name should be perpetuated. The problem of interpretation was highly perplexing. The consequence was, that the importance of Hebrew tradition for the correct interpretation of Holy Writ was suddenly realized. Since Jews were now excluded from both England and Spain, the protagonists in the dispute, it was to the Ghettos of Italy, and especially to that of Venice, that both sides turned for guidance. Richard Croke, who had been sent to collect opinions on behalf of Henry, from the various canon lawyers, applied for assistance to the famous Venetian humanist, Fra Francesco Giorgi. The latter had no difficulty in finding local Hebrew scholars who were willing to support the English thesis—notably one Marco Raphael, a recent apostate from Judaism, who fell over himself in his eagerness to oblige, and Elijah Menahem Halfon, the physician. The latter succeeded in collecting a number of signatures from Italian Rabbis to support his point of view. Hardly a day passed, reported Croke at the beginning of 1530 from Venice, when he did not confer upon the matter with some monk or some Jew.

There was one, however, upon whom he could not make any impression, the hard-headed Jacob Mantino, himself of Spanish birth, and protégé of the Pope, who declared himself whole-heartedly on the other side, as he did in every matter in which Halfon was concerned. This dispute embittered the feeling between the two rival physicians, with the

result (as already narrated) that when Solomon Molcho arrived at Venice a little later, he found them, to his cost, at daggers drawn. Meanwhile, Henry VIII, who had some opinion of himself as a theologian, insisted on having the rabbinical opinions sent for his perusal. In consequence, *faute de mieux*, Marco Raphael was despatched to England with his protector, Giorgi. Despite an attempt of the Spanish ambassador to waylay them, they arrived safely; and, in London, the apostate drew up a formal report to the complete satisfaction of his protector. He was, however, borne down by weight of learning and of numbers. With the exception of Halfon and a few others, almost all of the Italian Rabbis were ranged on the other side. Worst of all, at this very period a levirate marriage took place in Bologna between a Jew and his brother's widow. This threw all arguments on the other side into complete discredit. As far as England was concerned, breach with Rome was the only alternative. Nevertheless, this episode had a real importance in Jewish history; for it was this which, combined with the contemporary Reuchlin-Pfefferkorn controversy in Germany, began to rehabilitate Hebrew literature from the long discredit which it had suffered in Europe ever since the rise of Christianity.

For the maintenance of their dignity, the Jews of Venice owed a great deal to the Ottoman Empire, then among the greatest European powers, with which the *Serenissima* stood in peculiarly intimate relations. A race of soldiers and peasants, the Turks found the Jews supremely useful as merchants

and as craftsmen. Many were the graduates of the medical school of Padua who took their learning to the East and were appointed body physicians to the Sultan or the Grand Vizier, sometimes acquiring by this means considerable influence at the Sublime Porte. The Jewish linguistic ability, the product of long centuries of persecution and wanderings, secured them positions as dragomans in all of the legations in Constantinople, so that they became a power in Near Eastern diplomacy; and sometimes the Turks did not disdain to employ them on missions of the highest delicacy and importance. Thus in 1476, the Sultan had despatched to Venice a duly accredited Jewish envoy to arrange a peace. Though he died on the journey, at Capo d'Istria, the example was an inspiring one for his downtrodden coreligionists in western countries. The Spanish exiles of 1492 were warmly welcomed by the Sultans, and from that period the importance of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire considerably increased. It reached its climax with the rise of Joseph Nasi, whose amazing career embodies the quintessence of sixteenth century romance.

Among the refugees from Spain who had been forced to adopt Christianity in Portugal in 1497 were several members of the Nasi family, long distinguished in Spanish Jewish history. Some of them established in Lisbon a business in precious stones, which developed into a banking house of great importance. In the second decade of the sixteenth century, a branch was established at Antwerp, then the commercial center of northern Europe. In their

new home, where religious prejudice was less strong and where economic conditions offered great opportunities, the family prospered exceedingly; and the banking establishment which they controlled became one of the most important in Europe. In 1535, the head of the firm, Francisco Mendes, died at Lisbon; and his widow, Gracia, *alias* Beatrice de Luna, went to join her kinsfolk in the safer atmosphere of Antwerp. She was accompanied by her daughter, the beautiful Reyna. With them there went also her sister-in-law, widow of the late body physician to the king of Portugal, and their son João Miguez. In Antwerp, they immediately entered into the highest society, to which their vast wealth provided the key. They had many intimates among the nobility; and the Regent of the Netherlands, Mary of Hungary herself, sister to Charles V, did not scruple to solicit the hand of the lovely Reyna for one of her noble favorites. The mother replied that she would sooner see her daughter dead.

This incredible refusal turned the animosity of the government against the family. They were already suspected, with good reason, of being true to Judaism at heart; and Diego Mendes, Gracia's brother-in-law, had been prosecuted some time before for heresy. Now, scenting another persecution in the air, the whole family fled, first to Lyons, and then to Venice.

The arrival of this numerous and renowned family was not easily to be overlooked. In recent years, the Marranos had been migrating to Venice in some numbers, and the attention of the government had been drawn to the indubitable problem which they

presented. It was this fresh influx, perhaps, which brought matters to a head. In the following year, a decree was issued expelling from Venice all Marranos.[10] The Mendes family had not indeed taken as yet the drastic step of returning to Judaism. Doña Gracia's niece and ward, however, impatient of her tutelage, denounced her to the authorities. She was arrested on a charge of Judaizing, all of her property being confiscated, while the rest of the family had to take refuge at Ferrara. Henry III of France was emboldened by the example to lay his hands upon the vast properties belonging to the House to be found in his dominions, particularly at Lyons.

This was conduct which persons who had been on familiar footing with the proud hidalgos of the Peninsula would not brook lightly. The young João Miguez (who had already, according to report, requested the Venetian government in vain to set aside some island to which the Portuguese refugees might migrate without disturbance) determined to take drastic steps. The house of Mendes was at this time a power throughout Europe, and its voice was listened to with deference even in the Turkish capital. Here, moreover, Miguez could count upon the coöperation of Moses Hamon (like his own family of Spanish origin), body physician to Sulaiman the Magnificent. Tactful conversations impressed upon the Sultan the advisibility of securing the good will of this important family of merchant princes, and the advantages which might be expected to ensue if they could be tempted to settle in Turkey.

[10] See above, page 64.

The results were astonishing. The Sublime Porte sent an envoy to Venice peremptorily demanding the release of Doña Gracia and the removal of the embargo upon her property. The Venetian interests in the Near East were too precious to be jeopardized by a refusal, and so the Republic weakly consented to what was demanded. Gracia Mendes was permitted to go to join her relatives in Ferrara. The family was however weary of a life of duplicity, which (as had now been abundantly proved) was quite ineffectual to avert the consequences of Christian intolerance. Proceeding to Constantinople, where they were received with open arms, they threw off the disguise of Catholicism and reverted openly to the religion of their fathers. João Miguez himself reverted to his ancestral Hebraic name, being henceforth known as Joseph Nasi, and he took as his bride his cousin, the beautiful Reyna.

Joseph Nasi soon made for himself a prominent position in the Turkish capital. In a dispute for recognition as heir-apparent which broke out not long after his arrival, he espoused the cause of his patron, Selim, who was ultimately successful. Upon the latter's triumph, culminating in his accession to the throne in 1566, the Jew became a prime favorite at court. For a considerable time, he was omnipotent in State affairs. His influence and authority outweighed that of the Grand Vizier himself. All of the diplomatic corps in Constantinople recognized the need of securing his friendship and support. He corresponded almost on terms of equality with the kings and princes of Europe. He was created Duke

of Naxos and Prince of the Cyclades. As a statesman, he displayed remarkable vision and breadth of conception, but was hampered by his lack of vigor in execution. Most memorable among his achievements was the obtaining of a grant of the city of Tiberias in Palestine, where he endeavored to build up a Jewish settlement, being thus a forerunner of Zionism. Venice was kept well in touch with his progress, since it was from that port that he endeavored to arrange the migration of the oppressed Jews of the papal States, and direct the imports by which his colony might be economically strengthened.

Above all, he showed himself to be endowed with a tenacious memory for injuries received. France had confiscated the possessions of the Mendes family at Lyons; and, through his influence, French shipping in Turkish waters to the value of the amount in question, liberally estimated, was confiscated. Spain had persecuted his people, and he with his own family had been chased out of Flanders. Accordingly, he lent a favorable ear to the appeals for help of the Protestants of Northern Europe, and encouraged as far as he could the revolt of the Netherlands, which was in the end to prove the downfall of Spanish greatness. But above all his resentment was reserved for Venice, which had placed upon him and his family an undeserved slight. His policy was notoriously adverse to her in every detail. The silk industry which he endeavored to foster in his colony at Tiberias was calculated to harm her economically. When, in September 1569, a great fire broke out in the Arsenal at Venice and nearly

destroyed a great part of the city, he was generally suspected of having been the cause. Under any circumstance, he was quick to take advantage of the embarassment which resulted. Through his persuasion, the Sultan determined to set about the long intended attack on Cyprus, for a hundred years past a Venetian possession. On the conquest of this island, it was alleged, the Jewish favorite was to be made its king.

In the result, there was a bitter disappointment. The declaration of war was countered by a triple alliance between Venice, the Papacy, and Spain. On land, the operations proceeded favorably enough and, despite a gallant defence, Cyprus rapidly was overrun by the Turkish forces. However, on October 7th, 1571, a combined fleet of the Christian powers, commanded by Don John of Austria, utterly overwhelmed a superior Turkish force in the gulf of Lepanto. Among the captives were no less than 12,000 Christian slaves who had been sent to row in the galleys. This was the greatest naval engagement in living memory; and it marked the first important set-back in the conquering march of the Grand Seigneur which had threatened to overwhelm the whole of Europe. The news reached Venice in record time, only ten days after the engagement, by means of a swift galley laden with captured flags. The city was delirious with excitement and joy. A solemn Te Deum was chanted in the church of S. Marco. Public holiday, signalized by religious processions and services of thanksgiving, was kept

for four days. An annual celebration, still observed even at the present time, was instituted.

All of this was, however, considered an inadequate testimony of thanksgiving, so long as the city was defiled by the presence of infidels and of Jews. The latter, indeed, had joined with the rest of the population in its jubilation at the news; and David de' Pomi, the fashionable physician, actually presented to the Doge a memoir in which he proved, to his own satisfaction, that the glorious victory was predicted in the Bible. These facts, however, were overlooked. The tide of feeling against the Jews had been rapidly growing. Was it not one of them, the Sultan's favorite renegade, who was responsible for the whole affair? And when Famagosta, the capital of Cyprus, had fallen, was it not the Jews (according to rumor) who had flayed the heroic defender alive on behalf of their Turkish masters, sending the skin, stuffed with straw, as a trophy to Constantinople? Throughout the war, indeed, they had been suspected of favoring the enemy. When on the outbreak of hostilities all Turkish subjects had been thrown into prison, and stripped of everything which they possessed, it was the Levantine merchants who had especially suffered. With the lapse of time, the tide of feeling had grown. Now, the opportunity of revenge had come. On December 14th, the Senate met and passed a solemn decree with reference to recent events. It was desirable, they said, to make manifest the gratitude which they felt towards the majesty of the Almighty who had accorded the Republic victory against the enemies of His sacred

faith. Not only the Turks were comprised in this category; and it was not right to leave the unbelievers nearer home undisturbed. Therefore, in the name of the Holy Ghost, and for the honor of God, and in the public and private interest, it was solemnly ordained that, on the expiry of their present *condotta* some two years later, all Jews of whatever sex, grade, or condition should leave the city never to return. This measure was immediately proclaimed by the heralds throughout the town to the sound of the trumpet.

The news, though it can hardly have been unexpected, was received by the Jews with a general sense of disaster. For a considerable period, now, they had lived in Venice undisturbed, and they had come to disregard the legal precariousness of their right of residence. The community had been recruited from every quarter of the Jewish world, in Italy and beyond. Numbers had followed in the wake of security, and learning in the wake of numbers. Thus the city of the lagoons had become one of the greatest centers of rabbinic culture in Europe, as testified by the establishment of the most important Hebrew printing presses of the day. All protests and all endeavors were, however, in vain. It needed all of the efforts of the merchants from Corfu, always especially privileged, to secure an exemption in their own case. Nothing remained for the rest but to prepare their departure.

For a year and a half, the Jews of Venice lay under this sentence. Many of them had already departed—some to the cities of the *terra ferma*,

others to the Moslem lands of the Mediterranean littoral, where they could at last hope for respite. Those who remained were engaged in realizing their property as best they could in preparation for their departure. However, on July 7th, 1573, when only a few months were left before the fatal day, the Senate met and without a word of explanation revoked its previous decision at the proposal of the *Avogadori di Comun*. This, according to the terms of the edict of eighteen months previous, required a majority of no less than five sixths. The Jews were henceforth permitted, despite the threatening and sweeping language which had so recently been used, to remain in the city on the same conditions as before.

What was the reason? Jewish gold, it has been suggested; and, indeed, it was not unusual for bribes to be used as an aid to argument in such cases. There was, however, a more delicate consideration involved.

The victory of Lepanto had failed to produce the expected results. The Holy Alliance of the Christian powers was already disintegrating. A new Pope, less enthusiastic, had succeeded the fiery Pius V; while Venice, to whom commerce ultimately mattered more than religion, was wearying of the struggle. Meanwhile in Turkey, Nasi and his policy were no longer in favor, and the peace party was in the ascendant. The moment was opportune. Accordingly, the Venetian *bailo*[11] at Constantinople,

[11] According to the original sources, followed by Graetz and other modern historians, the hero of this episode was the *bailo*

Marcantonio Barbaro, who had been thrown into prison on the outbreak of war, was empowered to conclude a separate peace. For several months, the negotiations continued in the utmost secrecy. At last, on March 7th, 1573, the treaty was concluded; and the *bailo's* son, Francesco, was sent to Venice with the good tidings.

As his ship entered the harbor, according to the report of a contemporary chronicler, he passed a vessel which was making ready to put to sea; and a sound of general lamentation, accompanied by the crying of children, reached his ears across the water. He inquired the cause, and was informed that it was a convoy of Jewish exiles bound for the Levant. The news was for him highly displeasing. Immediately he had landed, he made it his business to see the Doge and expostulate on the subject. He pointed out that these new arrivals would assuredly strengthen the power of the Turkish Empire, as the exiles from Spain had done before them (it was, indeed, notorious how the latter had carried to the Levant their knowledge of the manufacture of artillery and gunpowder, without which some of the recent triumphant Turkish campaigns would have been impossible). But above all he pointed out another matter: how, despite the temporary eclipse of Joseph Nasi, the Jews remained a powerful influence at the Turkish court; how they were entrusted with the conduct of the most delicate diplomatic missions; and how it would be folly to

himself, whose name is given as Soranzo. This is not, however, in accordance with the historical facts.

alienate this powerful section of the population of the Turkish Empire precisely at a period when an attempt was being made to reëstablish friendly relations. This powerful advocacy was decisive. As a matter of fact, the flush of crusading enthusiasm which had succeeded the Battle of Lepanto was now at an end. The Jewish question could at last be envisaged from its economical and political, instead of its purely religious aspect. Moreover, in spite of the request of the Senate, no arrangements had been made for the replacement of the loan banks which the Jews were bound to maintain for the benefit of the poor, and a serious economic crisis seemed to be imminent. In view of all this, the repeal of the edict of expulsion is not to be wondered at.

A year after, almost to the day, the wheel of fortune turned full circle. The Jews, who so shortly before had been lying under a sentence of expulsion, had the joy of seeing one of their race enter the city as representative of the greatest monarch of the age, waited upon and courted by all of the aristocracy and the governing classes: a man who was proud of his association with his people, and who had probably been largely responsible, behind the scenes, for the recent deliverance. The eclipse of Joseph Nasi had put the supreme power at the Turkish court in the hands of the Grand Vizier, Mehemet Sokolli. The latter had as his body physician a certain Italian Jew of German origin named Solomon Ashkenazi, born at Udine and educated in medicine at Padua, who had previously served in the same

capacity to Sigismund Augustus, king of Poland, at Cracow. His ability and tact had won him golden opinions at Constantinople, where he had come to exercise an influence comparable to that of Joseph Nasi, though less obvious; so much so that the election of Henri of Valois to the crown of Poland had largely been due to his exertions. Contemporary opinion reported that it was his influence upon the Venetian representative at Constantinople which had been responsible to a large extent for the latter's intervention with the home government upon behalf of the Jews. It was now determined to take advantage of the unique qualifications of this much traveled physician by delegating him as Envoy Extraordinary to the Venetian Republic, in order to negotiate a treaty of alliance. In the Senate, objections were raised against receiving him, and long discussions ensued. However, the Grand Vizier insisted, and the haughty patricians had to give way. On July 7th, 1574, while the Jews were observing their annual fast in commemoration of the breach of the walls of Jerusalem, the envoy made his state entry. He was received by the Doge, Alvise Mocenigo, and the dignitaries of State, with all of the ceremonial which his status required. The delight of the Jews knew no bounds. Prayers were offered up for him in the Levantine synagogue, almost as though he were a reigning prince. Meir Parenzo, in a book printed at this time, could not refrain from mentioning the event in the colophon as an occurrence of unusual moment. Though it was found impossible to come to an agreement with the envoy, he was

dismissed on the conclusion of his mission with every token of esteem. The event left a deep impression in contemporary minds. Solomon's son, Nathan Ashkenazi, who like him had studied medicine at Padua, followed his father's example in combining the functions of physician and diplomat. When in 1605, he came on a visit to the city, he was received by the Doge Marino Grimani, to whom he brought letters of presentation from the Sultan; and the magnificence of his visit to the Ghetto and of his offerings to the local charities were long remembered.

Meanwhile, the *condotta* of 1574 had expired, and was again renewed. In the fresh contract, there was one new stipulation, namely that, until its term was expired, the residence of the Jews in the city could not be disturbed. Henceforth the continuance of the community of Venice was never seriously questioned. In 1669, indeed, an irresponsible patrician actuated by medieval ideas proposed in the Senate a total expulsion in the old style; but he was borne down overwhelmingly by weight of opinion. Though officially the Jews continued to be tolerated in Venice only on sufferance and for strictly limited periods of time, such conceptions as these were, by now, a thing of the past.

Happy, indeed, is the Jewish community that has no history; and this was to be the lot of that of Venice for some time. In its external relations, it was undisturbed; and, excepting for minor internal disputes and a few petty annoyances, there was no outstanding event which marked off the Ghetto from the rest of the city for many years after. The Jews

continued, however, to share the joys and the woes of the rest of the inhabitants—some of them in an exaggerated degree. Amongst the greatest horrors of the period were the epidemics of plague which returned at intervals to decimate the population. The sober way of life amongst the Jews, combined with their superior knowledge of medicine and their greater solicitude for the sick, might to some extent mitigate the effects; but these considerations were counterbalanced by the fact of their being cooped up in their Ghettos, where the infection, once it had entered, could not be checked until it had ravaged the whole population. One terrible outbreak had taken place in 1571. On this occasion, no less than 12,200 persons—among them 220 Jews—died in Padua alone. Venice was less severely stricken; but David de'Pomi recounts how he went about wearing a jacinth ring on his finger in order to avert infection, and subsequently presented the Doge a memoir upon the method to rid the city of any similar outbreak in the future. In 1596, there was at Venice an epidemic of smallpox, which cost the lives of seventy children in the Ghetto alone in a period of six months.

But the greatest visitation of the sort in Italian history, after the Black Death of 1348, was that of 1630, which lives in popular recollection as the Great Plague of thirty-five years later does in the history of England. On this occasion there perished in Venice no less than 50,000 persons, out of a total population of less than 150,000. For a long time the Jews were immune; but this good

fortune could not be expected to continue. The first victim was claimed in the *Ghetto Vecchio* in the autumn of 1630, during the Ten Days of Penitence. From that day on, the infection rapidly spread, though it was elsewhere on the decline. Since the general population feared to come to the Ghetto, the Jews were compelled to set up outside, for the public convenience, a loan bank, where they were obliged to continue to receive in pledge metal objects, though not clothing or similar dangerous articles. Seven hundred and fifty bales of merchandise belonging to Jewish merchants were confiscated and destroyed. For a period of one year, all manner of buying and selling was forbidden, with the result that trade came to a standstill. Notwithstanding this, a levy of 120,000 ducats in extraordinary taxation was exacted from the community to meet emergencies. Within the Ghetto, despair reigned. All excommunications for the enforcement of communal regulations were solemnly revoked, so as to lessen the general burden of sin. An attempt was made to check the vice of card-playing. Many of the Spanish merchants fled to the Levant, or to the *terra ferma*. Within a couple of months, no less than 170 persons had died. The neighboring parish of S. Geremia was deserted by the gentile practitioners; but Dr. Valensin, disregarding the prohibition for Jewish physicians to practice outside the Ghetto, worked with the utmost conscientiousness amongst the populace there, and was long remembered with gratitude for this action. The plague could not be considered at an end until the winter of 1631,

when, on the New Moon of Kislev, a jubilant celebration (preceded on the previous day by a penitential fast) was held in all of the Venetian synagogues.

Many of the fugitives from Venice had sought refuge at Verona. Possibly, they carried with them the seeds of infection. A legend still current in that city, however, tells a different tale. According to this, the Ghetto remained immune for a long time. At length, certain jealous scoundrels threw over the house-tops into it some clothing, which had been deliberately infected. The result was that plague broke out amongst the Jews as well, with terrible results. In the ancient cemetery, there is still pointed out the extra layer of earth which had to be introduced in order to accommodate the bodies of the victims. In Padua, the consequences were even more terrible. Out of a total Jewish population of 721, no less than 634 fell sick, while 421 succumbed. For the horror of the visitation, the infamous Ghetto system must be held largely responsible.

It did not take long for Venice to recover outwardly from the results of the plague, though as a matter of fact it struck a blow at her prosperity and commerce from which she never recovered. The population, which had been reduced from nearly 200,000 at the beginning of the century to less than half that figure thirty years later, rose again until in 1655 it amounted to over 150,000. The Jews, who after the plague numbered 2414, similarly increased, so that in the same year they reached their highest record, of nearly 5,000. The increase was not altogether a natural one.

Immigration continued from the cities of the mainland, from the Levant, and from Inquisition ridden Spain and Portugal. But above all at this period it came from the North. In 1648, there began in the Ukraine and Poland, at the hands of the Hetman Chmielnicki and his Cossack hordes, the most terrible wave of massacres which the annals of Jewish history have recorded. The whole of Europe became filled with hapless refugees, separated from their families and stripped of their possessions, wandering hither and thither to find rest. Many of them sought refuge in Venice, where they brought heart-rending accounts of the terrible experiences which they had undergone. The local community was whole-hearted in its sympathy. Into the liturgy of the Ninth of Ab, there was introduced an elegy on the victims, placing this disaster almost on a level with the Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which was commemorated on that occasion. The Jews of Venice nobly supported the endeavors of David Carcassoni, who came from Constantinople to collect money for the redemption of the prisoners who had fallen into the hands of the Tartars, the charitable brothers Aboab establishing a central fund for the purpose, and doing their best to interest their correspondents in Northern Europe. Facilities were given to the refugees for publishing, at the local printing presses, works by the sale of which they hoped to earn enough to reëstablish themselves in life and perhaps to redeem some of their near kindred from slavery. It is at Venice that a large number of the historical accounts which were to

acquaint Europe with the magnitude of the disaster saw the light.

The horror of these events marked, as it seemed, the darkest hour in the history of Hebrew martyrdom. The optimistic Jewish mind now began to watch, all the more hopefully, for the great Dawn which should succeed it. There was not long to wait.

Before two decades had elapsed there came a period, when the thoughts of Venetian Jewry were centered in the Holy Land and the neighboring lands more than ever before. In the year 1666, the whole of the Jewish world was convulsed by the appearance in the Levant of Sabbatai Zevi, that fascinating mystic who claimed to be the Messiah. From Hamburg to Cairo, scholars and courtiers of international reputation suddenly lost their heads, proffered their allegiance to the new King of Israel, and prepared to leave their homes at once to follow him. The little community of Avignon made ready to emigrate *en masse* to Palestine. In all of the bourses of Europe, hard-headed Jewish brokers were wagering large sums that their hero would be recognized by the Grand Turk within a very short period. The community of Venice did not escape the general craze. The whole city was agog with excitement. The arrival of every fresh vessel from the Levant was feverishly awaited. Eager groups in the Ghetto excitedly discussed each fresh report. The latest news was solicitously disseminated through the Jewish communities far and wide, where the latest reports from Venice were anxiously expected. Emissaries and enthusiasts from various congrega-

tions in Italy and beyond, who passed through the city on their way to join the pretender, brought with them tales of the excitement which ruled in their native place, adding thus to the turmoil.

The whole community was infected by the general wave of enthusiasm. Moses Zacuto, Rabbi, Cabalist, and playwright, who had stopped at Venice in the employ of the Ponentine Congregation while on his way from Amsterdam to Palestine *via* Poland, took the lead amongst the adherents of the pseudo-Messiah. Even sober scholars like Samuel Aboab were affected by the general temporary insanity. It was in vain that Jacob Sasportas (*Haham* of London, who had retired to the Continent to escape the Great Plague, and was now the only prominent person in Europe who kept a level head), sent him letters of warning and rebuke. In the Ghetto, there was a general wave of penitence and self-affliction, whereby men hoped to become worthy of enjoying the Messianic age. Children were named after the long-awaited King. A special prayer book was printed for use amongst his adherents. Abraham Pereira, a credulous but immensely wealthy Amsterdam enthusiast, set out for Palestine so as to be on the spot when the final deliverance took place; but he halted at Venice on the way, and his presence added to the general excitement. At the request of the congregational leaders, the Rabbinate sent an official missive to Constantinople, imploring fuller details. A forged reply which they received, written by one of Sabbatai Zevi's most credulous disciples, amply confirmed all of the expectations even of the

most optimistic. There can be little doubt that in the synagogues of Venice, as elsewhere in Europe, prayers on behalf of the self-appointed redeemer were substituted for those usually recited on behalf of the civil government. The Venetian ambassador to the Sublime Porte sent home diplomatic reports on the remarkable happenings which were taking place before his eyes.

Affected by the example, a certain weak-minded local mystic set up counterclaims for himself. Instead of being put under surveillance, as would probably have been the case under normal circumstances, he was mobbed, one Sabbath day, by a crowd of angry worshipers in the synagogue, and severely if not mortally wounded. Moses Nahmias, a stout believer in the claims of the pseudo-Messiah, journeyed to the Levant with the news. He found the pretender holding semi-regal state in the Castle of Abydos near Gallipoli, where he had been confined by the Turkish authorities. He received the report with complacence, immediately sending a letter to the Rabbinate of Venice in which he expressed his complete approval of the deed notwithstanding the serious breach of the day of rest which had been involved, and promised great rewards in the near future for all those who were equally zealous on his behalf. He closed by instructing that the good tidings of the approaching deliverance be disseminated throughout the Diaspora.

By now, the Turkish authorities, hitherto goodnaturedly indifferent, had begun to realize that it was time to suppress this dangerous dreamer. He

was sent for by the Sultan, and told to choose between apostasy and death. Cravenly, he preferred the former. Assuming the white turban of the true believer, he declared his acceptance of the Moslem faith, and left the royal presence as Mehemet Effendi and a court pensioner. The more credulous amongst his adherents were not affected in their belief even by this cowardly betrayal. It was necessary, they said, for the redeemer to experience every side of human life, down to the lowest and most ignominious, before his mission could be fulfilled. Nathan of Gaza, the pseudo-Messiah's prophet and accomplice, traveled through Europe to preach the intricacies of the new cult. By way of Corfu, where he had received a fairly encouraging welcome, he came to Venice (March 1668). The Rabbis of the city had however come to their senses. When they heard that the Prophet had arrived at the quarantine station, they solemnly proclaimed a sentence of excommunication upon any person who should dare to give him hospitality, or even speak to him. An exception was made in favor of the saintly Samuel Aboab, who, accompanied by Moses Zacuto, went to persuade the unwelcome intruder to leave peacefully.

This mission ended in failure. On shipboard, Nathan of Gaza had made the acquaintance of a couple of Venetian patricians, who, intrigued by his doctrines and his personality, had brought him ashore to their own palace, where he stayed the night. When they had heard from him as much as they wanted, they took him to the Ghetto, and

the authorities were compelled to admit him. By now, however, their blood was up, and they would allow no nonsense. The unfortunate prophet was forced to sign a declaration confessing that all of his pretended visions were sheer invention, and renouncing all belief in the Messianic claims of his accomplice. He was then embarked upon a small boat and sent up the river Panaro to Finale di Modena, whence he pursued his way to Tuscany. He was, however, preceded wherever he went by letters from the Venetian Rabbinate, with which were enclosed printed copies of the various confessions made there and elsewhere. His missionary tour therefore resulted in a complete fiasco. After a brief interlude at Rome, where he was reported to have endeavored to bring about a destructive flood by throwing cabalistical formulae into the Tiber, he at last returned to Sophia, where he died discredited.

Even now, however, the cult of the pseudo-Messiah was not at an end. For half a century, further pretenders and prophets followed in his track. Venice, as one of the great European headquarters of Jewish scholarship, continued to be a principal center of the consequent disputes. It was there that Nehemiah Hayyun carried on much of his insidious propaganda on behalf of the cult of Sabbatai Zevi, even after the latter's conversion and death; and, though he was combated by the brothers Jacob and Isaac Aboab, he either secured or else forged the approbations of other members of the Venetian Rabbinate. It was here, too, that Abraham Cardoso, a Marrano champion of the new cult, had officially

returned to Judaism. Many years afterwards, when the tide was dying down, the Rabbis of Venice, headed by Isaac Pacifici, took a leading part in combating the dangerous tendency represented by Moses Hayim Luzzatto (the mystical poet who afterwards had similar Messianic aspirations), sending delegates to Padua to collect evidence against him, and ultimately condemning his writings and excommunicating any person who should dare to read or to possess them. Another late echo of the milleniary movement reached Venice in 1700, when a group of Polish pietists headed by Judah Hasid, dressed in white shrouds in token of penitence, passed through the city on their way to Palestine, where they confidently expected to witness the Redemption.

The Ghetto of Venice. From a Plan of the 18th Century

CHAPTER IV

THE GHETTO AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

The stranger to Venice who passed in his gondola down the broad Rio Canareggio towards the Grand Canal could hardly have escaped noticing, as he approached the elegant stone bridge which leads to the magnificent church dedicated to the prophet Jeremiah, an increasing number of swarthy persons, men and women, all wearing a uniform red headdress, going somewhat furtively about their business towards the heart of the city. If he had the curiosity to watch a little more closely, he would have noticed that all appeared to come from under a low, vault-like arch leading out of the paved way which skirts the canal at this point and equipped with a massive gate. This, he would have been told on inquiry, was the famous Ghetto, the prototype of all those of Italy, to which hundreds of distinguished strangers made their way for sight-seeing when they came to visit the city.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the Jewish quarter of Venice had reached its greatest extension. The gateway which led from the Fondamenta della Pescaria—the old fish-market, abutting on the Rio Canareggio—gave access to the *Ghetto Vecchio*—a long, narrow street, close and insalubrious. This was skirted by a network of courtyards and

alleys: the Calle Mocato, the Calle dei Barucchi, the Corte Scalamatta, the Calle dell' Orto, and others. The *Ghetto Vecchio*, after broadening out into a little *piazza*, the Campiello delle Scuole, twisted a little and then led over a bridge into a broad square, the *Ghetto Nuovo:* paradoxically enough, be it remembered, the original Jewish quarter. Across a bridge to the east of the *Ghetto Nuovo* was the latest addition, the *Ghetto Nuovissimo*, consisting of the Calle del Porton (named after the gateway to which it led) and a couple of other alleys. Water was drawn from half a dozen public wells scattered here and there throughout the area.

Within this space was cooped the whole of the Jewish population of Venice. According to an old but dubious authority, this is said to have numbered 1300 persons as early as the twelfth century. For the Ghetto period, we are better informed. The population reached its apex in the middle of the seventeenth century, numbering in 1655 nearly five thousand souls[12] (a century before, it had hardly

[12] The following are the official figures, from Contento, *Il censimento della Popolazione sotto la Repubblica Veneta* (*Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, vol. xx) and Beloch, *La popolazione di Venezia nei secoli xvi e xvii* (Ibid., New Series, vol. ii):—

Date	Total Population	Jewish Population
1552	158,067	902
1555	159,867	923
1556	163,166	923
1563	168,627	1424
1586	148,640	1694
1593	139,459	1043
1606–7	190,714	1157
1624	142,804	—
1632	98,244	2414

exceeded 900). After this period, numbers rapidly declined.

For a population so great, the space in the Ghetto was obviously inadequate. Accordingly, relief was sought through the expedient adopted in New York, under circumstances not wholly dissimilar, some centuries later. The inhabitants sought vertically that expansion which was impossible laterally. Story

Date	Total Population	Jewish Population
1642	120,439	(549 householders)
1655	158,722	4870
1766	140,256	1673
1771	138,700	1624
1780	140,286	1521
1785	139,095	1570
1790	136,803	1517

In 1790, the Jewish population was composed of 189 children up to 14 years of age, 774 women, 457 adult males from 14 to 60, and 97 men over 60.

The Jewish population of 4870 given for 1655 appears at first blush excessive, and it has been suggested that the figures should be corrected to 1870. But the resilience and commercial prosperity which made it possible for the total population of the city to recover after the plague of 1630 from 98,000 to 158,000 in a period of less than a quarter of a century renders this remarkable increase quite within the bounds of possibility, especially if we consider that this was a period of considerable immigration; as Jewish merchants from the Levant, Marranos from Spain and Portugal, and above all Polish refugees from the Cossack massacres were all streaming into the city at this time. While from 1606 to 1632 the general population was nearly halved, the Jewish was nearly doubled; and one may imagine that the tendency continued. The estimate of 549 householders in the intermediate year 1642 would indicate a population of something like 3500 individuals; while the English traveler, Skippon, estimated a total of 4,000 in 1663. It was customary in the Venetian Ghetto to avoid the sin of "numbering the people" in the Biblical fashion. Every individual had to put a coin in a box as a charitable oblation, and the result was arrived at by counting the collection.

after story was piled upon the buildings, already none too substantial; so that from outside the houses of the Ghetto could be seen towering high over all the neighborhood, like primitive sky-scrapers. The constructions were, however, more audacious than solid. It was by sheer good fortune that there never took place in Venice any disaster comparable to those which occurred from time to time in other Italian Ghettos, when one of these ramshackle buildings suddenly collapsed under some unwonted strain, transforming the celebration of a marriage or a betrothal into an occasion of general mourning. Under the circumstances, for a family to occupy a whole house was exceptional, if not impossible. Nearly every building was divided up, in the continental fashion, into a large number of apartments, at least four or five families living in each. It was indeed said that twenty Jews lived in a space which would hardly have been sufficient for a quarter as many Gentiles.

The excessive population had a characteristic result. In Venice the Jew was forbidden to possess real estate by laws which dated back to the fifteenth century and were constantly reënacted. It was impossible therefore for him to become the proprietor of the house in which he lived. All of the property in the Ghetto was thus in the hands of gentile landlords. When the Jews entered into possession, rentals were raised by one third, the community making itself collectively responsible for payment. Thereafter, they were supposed never to be increased. Since ownership of the houses was impossible, a

certain security of tenure was ensured by a development of the old Jewish conception of *Hazakah* or prescriptive right. Thus there was established, under the most severe social and ecclesiastical sanctions, a sort of tenant right in favor of the actual occupant, which protected him against exploitation and unfair competition. No man was permitted to offer a higher rent than what was then paid or to obtain the ejection of the actual occupant by any other means. This prescriptive right was thus converted into a sort of permanent lease. It could be disposed of by donation or by sale. It passed by inheritance from father to son, or was frequently comprised in the dowry of a daughter. As long as the rental was paid, the right of the occupant was safe. The *jus gazaga* (as it was termed in a hybrid Latin and Hebrew form) was subsequently recognized even by the civil authorities.

Under the circumstances, one of the greatest dreads of Ghetto life was that of fire; for the buildings were so high and so inflammable, and the isolation from the outside world so complete, that enormous damage was likely to be done before succor could arrive. Few of the original buildings can be left in the Jewish quarter at Venice today. The Jews were supposed to maintain their own apparatus for the purpose of fighting the flames; but it was not always effective. Thus, on the night of April 14–15th, 1752, there was a destructive outbreak in the Calle dei Barucchi in the *Ghetto Vecchio*. The damage caused was said to amount to over one million ducats. Six persons—two of them Christians—lost their lives

in the flames, while twenty-four were more or less severely injured. Much admiration was aroused by the heroism of a Jewish youth, who threw himself boldly into the flames to save his mother.[13] There was another destructive outbreak in 1765 in the Great Synagogue of the German rite, which was commemorated in a hymn long recited upon the anniversary. In the other cities under Venetian rule, conditions were much the same. At Verona, a terrible conflagration broke out in the Ghetto on the night of October 30th, 1786. Notwithstanding all of the efforts made to extinguish it, it raged for three days; and, before it was mastered, five persons were killed, and a large number injured. The artist, Vita Greco, depicted this disaster in one of his paintings. When an outbreak of fire might be so destructive, the general gladness when it was extinguished without doing any great damage may be imagined. In Padua, they celebrated until recently, as an annual festivity, the *Purim del Fuoco*, in commemoration of the escape of the community on such an occasion in 1795. This was signalized also in a congratulatory ode addressed to the governor of the city in recognition of the energetic measures which he had taken at the time. However, not content with relying in future upon a similar display of divine clemency, the congregation took steps at

[13] The conduct of some individuals at this time of disaster was not exemplary; witness a proclamation of April 18th ordering all the inhabitants of the Ghetto to restore to one of the Rabbis within twenty-four hours objects pilfered during the outbreak of three days before.

the same time to reorganize the provision made in the Ghetto for fighting the flames.

The Venetian Ghetto was surrounded by high walls pierced by only three gateways: the principal one to the south leading to the Fondamenta della Pescaria; another at the opposite extremity, at the end of the bridge over the Rio di S. Girolamo; and a third giving access to the *Ghetto Nuovissimo*. This was to make sure that every Jew was safely segregated at night. The gates (the jambs and hinges of which may still be seen—mute witnesses of the oppressive spirit of an age long past) were opened each morning at the tolling of the Marangona (as the great bell in the Campanile of S. Marco was called), and closed in the evening towards nightfall (the precise time, which differed in summer and in winter, was constantly changed). Similarly, they were kept perpetually closed during the major solemnity of the Christian year—from sunrise on Holy Thursday to the afternoon of the following Saturday, at nones. At the same time, all of the windows of the Ghetto which gave outwards were sealed. Thus it was ensured that no Jew should be seen abroad at the season of the Passion, a measure intended in part for their safety, but far more for their humiliation. Absence from the Ghetto during prohibited hours was punishable by fines increasing in severity with each repetition, and ultimately accompanied by imprisonment. The enforcement of these regulations was entrusted to the Christian custodians, who acted as gatekeepers—the only Gentiles allowed to live in the Ghetto, though they

were not allowed to be accompanied by their families. The considerable expense which this involved had to be defrayed by the community.

Originally, the control of the Jewish financiers summoned to the city had been in the hands of the *Sopraconsoli*, with whom the supervision of the banking businesses continued to reside. By the time of the institution of the Ghetto, the supervision of the general affairs of the community had passed from their hands into those of the *Cattaveri*.[14] This was a magistracy consisting of three patricians introduced in 1280 to control public property and utilities. Later, their duties included, amongst other things, "inquiring into the interest charged by the Jews, and chastizing them if they went abroad at night or did not wear the red hat, or if they had to do with Christian women." Their authority gradually extended, so that at a later period they took over that share which had previously been vested in the Patriarch. For a long time, the Levantine and Ponentine merchants did not come within their scope, remaining under the control of the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* or Mercantile Tribunal. Besides these officials, the Jews were subject in certain matters to a number of other bodies. Early in the eighteenth century, under circumstances which we shall see later, the main authority over them was vested in a new magistracy called the *Inquisitorato sopra gli Ebrei*.

From 1516, when, for the benefit of the poor of the city, the Jews were admitted into Venice for a

[14] 'Exactors.'

limited period, the community could account itself firmly established. Though once or twice subsequently its existence was threatened, it was never interrupted. Nevertheless, the Jews never succeeded in shaking off the temporary and conditional status with which their settlement had originated. At intervals, when their current agreement expired, they had to receive a *ricondotta* from the authorities for a further short period, of three, five, or ten years; and they were allowed to remain only upon condition of continuing to maintain the loan banks for the benefit of the city. True, the *ricondotta* was never refused; but, had it been allowed to expire, the Jews would automatically have been obliged to evacuate the city. The system was begun at a time when the Jew was barely tolerated in Venice, and when her name was as yet unfamiliar in the Jewish world. It continued at the period of the heyday of the community, when it played a notable part in the civic life and had a renown second to none in Italy. It was protracted even at the period when elsewhere emancipation had begun to be a reality, and when the *Serenissima* was tottering to her fall. It was not altogether a fiction. From time to time, fresh conditions of some importance would be inserted in the *ricondotta*; while at the close of the eighteenth century one was issued which embodied a drastic change in public policy.

One integral part of the Ghetto system was enforced at Venice with peculiar rigor—the wearing of the Jewish badge. This expedient, first invented by a Moslem ruler to mark out for scorn all unbe-

lievers alike, was introduced into Europe as an additional humiliation for the Jews by the Lateran Council of 1215. In Venice, it was first enforced in 1394, the badge taking the usual form of a circle of yellow cloth, the size of a fourpenny loaf, which had to be sewn on the breast of the outer garment. Elsewhere in Italy, up to the middle of the sixteenth century, the regulation in question was most honored in the breach. The *Serenissima*, however, took it more seriously, so that, during the course of the fifteenth century, it was reënacted no less than nine times. The badge as previously worn was, however, thought to be insufficiently prominent and too easily concealed. In consequence, in 1496, the form was changed. Henceforth, every Jew had to wear a yellow hat or one covered with material of that color, a distinction even more unlovely than that which had previously obtained. Ultimately, at the close of the sixteenth century, the statutory hue was changed to red.[15] In 1680, a French traveler described it as a hat covered with crimson cloth, lined and edged with black, the poorer classes wearing a waxed material instead of ordinary cloth.

Time after time, down to late in the eighteenth century, this infamous obligation was reënforced. In 1680, the authorities ordered an inquiry to be made concerning those persons who were aiding and abetting the Jews to dispense with their distinctive sign. In 1720, the whole of the population was

[15] Down to the middle of the seventeenth century, however, the distinctive badge worn by the Levantine Jews, who were under a different control, was a yellow turban.

enlisted as accomplices for enforcement by a decree which permitted any person who saw a Jew outside the Ghetto wearing a headdress not of the proper color, to snatch it from his head and to take it to the authorities, being promised a reward if a conviction should ensue. Subsequently, the Jews attempted to evade the provision by covering a headdress of the statutory shade with black waxed cloth. This was prohibited in 1724. The obligation continued to be renewed periodically down to the second half of the eighteenth century. However, by the period of the fall of the Republic, it had fallen into complete desuetude, the humiliation of the Jews being by now (as an unsympathetic observer asserted) complete without it.

The opposition to this humiliatory legislation had been strenuous and long. Down to the close of the sixteenth century, the community contributed comparatively large sums out of their funds for the defense of any persons imprisoned "by reason of the black hat." However, the resistance was in vain. Only privileged persons were exempted from the obligation, such as students at the University of Padua, or protégés of foreign powers, like Jacob Mantino, or persons who had deserved well of the State, like the family of Israel Conegliano, or certain Jews of Zante who had distinguished themselves in the Turkish War. When traveling outside the city, and thereby exposed to attack, the Jews were permitted to dispense with the differentiatory badge and to wear black headgear like other citizens, as well as to carry swords for self-defense. This was,

however, the solitary exception. The consequence was curious in the extreme. Ultimately, the red hat seems to have acquired a semi-sanctity amongst the Venetian Jews, as being their proper distinctive wear. It was the color chosen for the headdress of the ministers who officiated in the synagogues, from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, when the obligation had fallen into general desuetude, the Rabbis continued, with a needless conservatism, to cling to the old manner of dress which had been introduced in the teeth of considerable opposition as a mark of humiliation!

In other respects, the policy of the Venetian government towards the Jews was at least just. Religious persecution of the kind that prevailed elsewhere in Italy never penetrated into Venice, which persisted in maintaining, up to a certain point, its freedom from papal authority. The pretensions of the Holy Office to authority over the Jews were strenuously and effectively resisted, on the plea (elaborated by Fra Paolo Sarpi) that they were infidels and not heretics. The conversionist sermons regularly held in the Roman churches, at which Jews were forced to attend, never obtained a vogue under the rule of the *Serenissima*, in spite of clerical efforts. In 1570, the community was formally exempted from any such obligation, this being repeated in 1601 and embodied in subsequent *ricondotte* as a fundamental Jewish privilege. Thus the institution was prevented from gaining a hold. In Padua, the power of the Church was so strong that it would

not surrender its claims so easily. The central government warned the local authorities not to tolerate any innovation in this respect; for, as they shrewdly put it, "violent measures in the matter of religion are more likely to exasperate the minds of those against whom they are directed, than to edify them." Nevertheless, the Church would not yield; and, down to the beginning of the eighteenth century, the conversionist sermons continued to be delivered in Padua (the text of one, preached in the Church of the Eremite Friars in 1715, is still extant). However, in the absence of any governmental coöperation, it is not likely that the Jews were seriously inconvenienced.

Forced attendance at conversionist sermons was not the only method devised by zeal for the propagation of the faith. Another (encouraged by the popular superstition that paradise could be acquired by securing the conversion of a Jew) was the kidnaping and baptism of children. This was never elevated into a system in the Venetian territories, as it was at Rome, where it constituted down to the nineteenth century one of the terrors of Jewish life. As early as 1502 the abuse was forbidden by the Republic, and the example thus set was consistently followed. Sarpi gave it as his considered opinion that it was not merely injustice, but an actual crime, to convert to another faith a creature incapable of reason. A century and a half later this opinion was confirmed by the *Consultore* Trifone Vrachien in a noble memorandum. Accordingly, the government did its best to counteract the efforts of zealous

bigots who endeavored to follow the example of Rome. Time after time, down to the fall of the Republic, it was prohibited for any person to baptize a Jewish child without the consent of the parents. On one notable occasion, after consultation with its theological advisers, the government decided that there was no justification to claim for Christianity an abandoned three-year-old boy of Jewish parentage, who had been found wandering about the streets. Such a display of broadmindedness, in that age, was unique. Nevertheless, the conversion of adults was regarded as a highly meritorious action; and, once they were baptized, everything was done to keep them from Jewish influences. A marble tablet still to be seen just inside the gateway of the Ghetto forbade entrance to any neophyte, under the severest penalties. Venice possessed, like most other Italian cities, its home for converts (*Casa dei Catacumeni*), situated on the Fondamentina, which no Jew was so much as allowed to approach. As late as 1794, three Jewish dealers in old clothes were denounced to the authorities for having dared to pass beneath its windows, plying their trade in the traditional vocal manner. In spite of this provision, very few notable converts were secured at Venice. An exception was Samuel Nahmias, *alias* Giulio Morosini (1612–1687), who subsequently entered the service of the Pope in Rome and wrote a conversionist work, the *Via della Fede*, which is extraordinarily replete with information for the reconstruction of the social history of the Ghetto in his day.

The protection of the Jews from forcible conver-

sions was, as it were, retrospective. From the close of the sixteenth century, as we have seen, Venice was one of the few places at which Catholicism prevailed, where the Marranos from the Peninsula were permitted to return to the religion of their fathers without disturbance. Conversionism amongst Christians was, however, another matter. When that heroic proselyte, Nicholas Antoine (the Swiss pastor who died a martyr's death at the stake at Geneva in 1632), attempted to enter Judaism in Venice, the Rabbis did their best to dissuade him; while Johann Peter Spaeth, *alias* Moses Germanus (d. 1701), a notable convert of Venetian birth, became a Jew at Cleves.

The infamous blood libel, which caused the Jews untold suffering in past ages, was never very prevalent in Italy. The Venetian government, after a solitary period of weakness at the close of the fifteenth century, at the period of the pretended martyrdom of Simon of Trent, never showed it the slightest countenance. When in 1603 an allegation of the sort was made at Verona, the accused person was given a fair trial, and triumphantly acquitted. Henceforth, no opportunity was given for such a case to arise again. In the year 1705, at Eastertide, there was displayed outside the church of S. Giacomo, near the Rialto, a large painting representing the martyrdom at the hands of Jews, of some Christian child (presumably, Simon of Trent), accompanied by an inflammatory inscription. Such a display must inevitably have tended to arouse the popular passions —all the more so since precisely at this period a

blood accusation which had been trumped up against a couple of Roman Jews at Viterbo, was giving rise to some disturbance. Accordingly, the *Gastaldi*, or lay leaders of the community, went to the Doge's palace appealing for protection, and invoking the precedent established two hundred and thirty years before. The *Avogadori di Comun* at once sent to have the picture seized and brought to them; and, finding that the description given of it was not exaggerated, they took immediate steps to render it innocuous. This display of firmness quieted the last echo of the blood accusation to occur in the Venetian territories as long as the rule of the *Serenissima* lasted. It is a somewhat melancholy reflection that, after the fall of the Republic, cases of the sort should have occurred in its old possessions—once, in 1857, under Austrian rule at Rovigo; and again, at the very close of the century, in the island of Corfu. The comparison shows Venetian administration at its best.

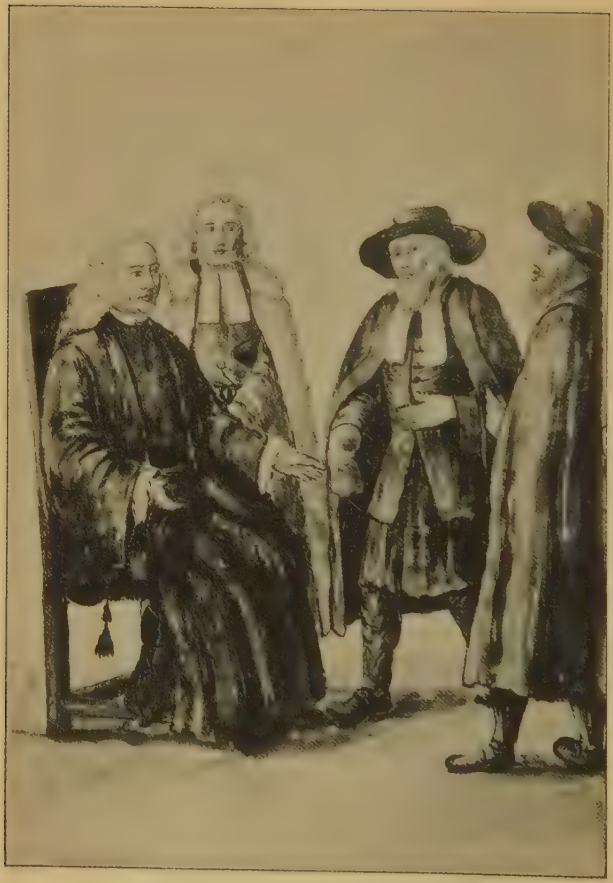
The toleration and protection enjoyed by the Jews in Venice was not by any means disinterested, nor did it purport to be so. Indeed, down to the very end its official *raison d'être* was the maintenance of the banks in the Ghetto for the benefit of the poorer inhabitants. This did not, however, exhaust the Jewish obligations. At the close of the eighteenth century, when the community was in full decadence, and the reduction in its wealth had been officially recognized, its annual dues still amounted to nearly 65,000 ducats yearly. This included, besides a statutory contribution for the maintenance of the

banks, an annual tribute of 25,000 ducats, a payment of 25,000 to cover house rentals, 2621 to the *Milizie del Mare*, or Navy Board, and 100 for the upkeep of canals. This was exclusive of a further extraordinary payment of 10,000 ducats annually in time of war—which, over a long period, was the normal state of Venice. At times of stress, further 'voluntary' contributions to a considerable amount would be expected. How far these figures were exceeded at the period of the heyday of the community may be gauged from the fact that in the seventeenth century the annual tribute came to 85,000 ducats instead of 25,000. Other impositions must have been proportionately high. During the Cretan war the subsidies that the community was forced to give were vast, amounting to upwards of 670,000 ducats in five years. In the subsequent struggle, they were no less exploited. In 1669, they lent the government 100,000 ducats at the moderate interest of 4 per cent; in 1681 a further 150,000; an equal sum in 1686; and 100,000 (in finding which the communities of Rovigo and of Verona collaborated) in 1691—a total of half a million ducats in less than a quarter of a century! In the end, the Jews maintained a fixed capital of 1,500,000 ducats on loan to the treasury, receiving a variable interest, which was never high.

Besides these corporate dues, the Jewish merchants individually paid vast sums to the State. In the seventeenth century, 270 persons gave an average of from two to ten ducats a head for the license to live in Venice, and a few of the wealthier as much as

600 ducats. The payments made to the customs were enormous. Even in the eighteenth century, one merchant prince paid nearly half a million ducats in a period of only two decades. In normal years, it was estimated that the State received from the Jews as much as 142,254 ducats annually in direct dues, without counting an average of 120,000 in customs revenue. Before the Jewish population had reached its maximum, it was said to be worth a full 200,000 ducats annually to the treasury.

There was incumbent upon the community additionally a large number of other burdens of a non-monetary description, which were more galling though less onerous than the fixed payments already mentioned. When the magistrates paid their official visit to the Lido to witness the artillery practice, the Jews had to make at their own expense all preparations for their reception, on a lavish scale. Similarly, on Shrove Thursday, they had to arrange for the entertainment of the *Signoria*. Whenever the Doge held an official banquet in his palace (and the luxury in seventeenth and eighteenth century Venice was extreme) they had to deck the palace with tapestries. On the occasion of the visit of any foreign potentate or eminent personality, who was entertained at the public expense, they had to provide all of the furniture for the palace or apartment taken for him. The pretext was that the Jews, as dealers in secondhand wares, had the material for all this at hand. In the mass, however, what with the inevitable wear and tear and the perquisites of the



The Reception of the Capitano Grande in the Venetian Ghetto

petty officials, it must have been a very considerable burden on the community.

Quite apart from the governmental dues, there were certain other minor claims upon the Jews. Thus it was formerly incumbent on them to pay a yearly tribute of twenty or twenty-five *zequins* to the church of S. Geremia, in which parish the Ghetto was situated. Later, when this custom fell into disuse, they were compelled to give the church the furnishings for the model of the Holy Sepulcher which was erected in it each year at Eastertide; while, in Lent, they had to provide the hangings for the pulpit. Even the police demanded a fee. When a fresh *Messere*, or *Capitano Grande* (as the chief of the *sbirri* or constables was called) received his appointment, he paid a state visit to the Ghetto, in the middle of which an armchair would be prepared for him. Taking his seat upon this, he graciously promised that he would be vigilant, so as to secure the Jews 'happy sojourn.' In return for this benevolent declaration, one of the *Gastaldi* would approach with a profound obeisance and present him, in the name of the community, with a purse containing sixty ducats.

Within the Ghetto, the community had to support all of the burdens as well as the privileges of semi-autonomy. Accordingly, it had to defray minor expenses, such as those of lighting and cleaning the streets, which should properly have devolved upon the Government. Besides the scavenger, there were other permanent paid officials, such as the secretary of the community and the *sagatino*, who slaughtered

meat according to the Jewish rites. More galling than this was the burden of the salaries and incidental expenses of the gatekeepers who acted as gaolers. Finally, there was a regular distribution to the poor on the public account, quite apart from private charity. This last item amounted, at the close of the eighteenth century, to an average of 190 lire each month.

The enormous sums needed to defray all of these expenses were raised by internal taxation—a right formally conceded in 1527. To this, all persons between the ages of twenty and sixty had to contribute, no man being allowed to stir outside the Ghetto until he had done so. During the heyday of Venetian Jewry, a number of *tansadori* (as they were called) were appointed, who assessed how much each individual was to pay. For this purpose, they had to meet together in joint session for two hours daily over a period of forty-five days. Upon assuming office, they took a solemn oath of secrecy before the Ark of the Law. In case any one of them divulged the result of the deliberations, he had to ask the divine pardon publicly in the synagogue. Every six months, two auditors (elected every two and a half years) had to go through the accounts and check them. In 1685, an innovation was introduced. Henceforth, each of the *tansadori* had to compile independently a secret register of his assessment for every individual. The average of the separate estimates was reckoned out and reduced by one-fifth, this representing what each individual was to pay.

Such systems were, however, obviously unsatisfactory. They inevitably took more account of a man's expenditure than of his income, tending to fleece the more liberal, while they spared the parsimonious. Moreover, they were semi-public; and in the narrow space of the Ghetto, where every man was not only the neighbor but also the business competitor of every other, absolute secrecy was essential. Accordingly, towards the close of the seventeenth century, a new system became common in Italy. This was based upon self-assessment, each individual placing in a chest the amount which he thought he ought to pay, in the presence of a couple of representatives of the community—generally the Rabbi and secretary—who were supposed to see that no palpable fraud was practiced. In addition, excommunication was fulminated against all attempts at evasion. The *cassella* system, as it was called (from the *cassa* or coffer used to collect the amounts), was introduced into Venice for an experimental period of two years in 1699, with the approval of the Senate, by all of the three 'nations.' Elsewhere in Italy—as, for example, in Padua and Verona—the system became quasi-permanent. In Venice, however, it was found unsatisfactory; and, in 1710, it was decided to leave the matter in the hands of the Rabbis, with whom each individual came to an independent arrangement according to the promptings of his own conscience. This arrangement was decided upon without the approbation of the civil authorities—a fact which attracted much unfavorable notice at the time. In 1722, something closely

approaching to the original system was reintroduced, after half a century of experiment, the matter being remitted once more to secret assessors. In the earlier period, the maximum tax which might be imposed upon any individual was limited to 500 ducats, but at a later period this was doubled. It is curious to note this limitation, which is in direct opposition to all modern tendencies. Until well on in the eighteenth century, each of the three 'nations' remained fiscally autonomous, collecting independently the sums which it had to contribute under its own separate regulations—which, however, were generally in close approximation. It was only in 1726 that, for the first time, they came to an arrangement together to avoid disputes—a first step towards complete amalgamation.

A similar system of taxation applied for strangers. This was, indeed, just. They, no less than the natives, enjoyed all of the advantages, both communal and civic, for which the community paid so heavily; and that they should share in its expenses was only equitable. On the other hand, the community from which they had come refused to give up its claim upon their financial support. Accordingly, there was always a constant bickering throughout Italy in this matter. Neither side would relinquish its claims. From all directions, excommunications and counter-excommunications would be threatened and sometimes launched in case of persistent refusal; and appeals would be made to all of the prominent Rabbis of the age for their decision in any problem of peculiar delicacy. The community of Venice made

a strenuous attempt to exact a tax on all commercial operations carried out locally by any 'foreign' Jew, who accordingly was enjoined to keep a register of all his affairs. In 1736, the *cassella* system was introduced for this also, all strangers being supposed to pay a certain proportion, varying from one-eighth to one-half per cent, on all operations transacted during the course of their stay. In 1791, a battle royal took place between the Rabbinates of Venice and of certain other places as to the permissibility according to Jewish law of forcing strangers to pay by means of the weapon of excommunication. With the various communities of the Venetian territory on the *terra ferma*, there was a mutual arrangement for exemption. Levantine merchants who were Turkish subjects paid a flat rate of one-eighth per cent, becoming subject to ordinary taxation only after a period of two years' residence. Natives of Corfu, always privileged, enjoyed a similar exemption.

In its internal affairs, the Jewish community (or *Università degli Ebrei* as it was generally called) was, within certain limitations, autonomous. In its constitution, it was a democracy in the old sense of the word, what we would today term rather an oligarchy, though its tendency in that direction was far less pronounced than that of Venice itself or of any of the other so-called republics of Renaissance Italy.[16] The ultimate authority resided in the 'Congregation' (*Kahal Gadol*), consisting of all those

[16] The picture which follows is a composite one, based upon general seventeenth-and eighteenth century conditions, but cannot be applied in every detail to any one particular period.

householders in the Ghetto who paid more than 12 ducats yearly in communal taxation. These numbered in the seventeenth century a little over one hundred in all (sixty 'Ponentines,' twelve 'Levantines,' and forty 'Germans'). This constituted only about one-sixth of the total number of adult males, and provides an illuminating sidelight upon the distribution of wealth in the community. Occasionally, there were bitter murmurings over the despotic power which was wielded by a small minority over those who were not so well blessed in worldly goods as themselves. Nevertheless, the absoluteness of this oligarchy was tempered by the great regard always paid in Jewish life to learning, which afforded the Rabbis and scholars an important voice (which they never hesitated to exercise) in the control of public policy.

At the head of the 'Congregation' (which was summoned together only in emergency, or for the discussion of matters of special importance) stood seven *Capi*, or *Gastaldi* (*Parnasim*, or *Memunim*, as they were designated in Hebrew), who together formed the *Va'ad Katon*, or deliberative council. These dignitaries represented Venetian Jewry in its dealings with the outside world, receiving and executing the communications of the government or waiting upon it at times of emergency. They also trespassed (as was the rule in Italy) upon the ancient rabbinical prerogatives, serving as a judicial court to settle internal disputes in congregational matters, as well as in civil cases in which their decision was invoked by both parties. Interference by them in

other matters, or compulsion of unwilling litigants to submit to their jurisdiction, was, however, sternly suppressed by the civil authorities. Even in these Jewish courts, the custom was prevalent for each side to be represented by an expert advocate, though contemporary rabbinical authorities heartily disapproved. A member of the body (with, in certain cases, one coadjutor) acted as *Gabbai* (*'esattore'*) to collect the communal taxation, and another as *Gizbar* (*'cassiere'*) to control expenditure.

The *Va'ad Katon* was elected by the 'Congregation' every two and a half years by secret ballot, from participation in which close relatives of the various candidates were excluded. Reëlection on one occasion was allowed, but no person was permitted to retain office for more than five years. The elections were presided over by one of the acting *Capi*, assisted by two scrutineers and a secretary. Of the seven members, three represented the Spanish and German 'nations' respectively, while the remaining one was a Levantine. From 1645, an additional honorary *Capo*, consisting of the person who had most narrowly escaped election in the ballot, was appointed for each 'nation,' bringing the total membership of the Council up to ten. In the eighteenth century, however, when the population dwindled, the number was reduced to five. Each of the three 'nations' was similarly governed in its internal affairs by a Council consisting of two wardens, two collectors, and two treasurers. Each elected also, year by year, two *Parnasè Mezonot* to

supervise the provision of food prepared according to the Jewish rites.

That some of the Jews were not satisfied with the way in which they were governed goes without saying. Time after time, from the middle of the sixteenth century downwards, it was found necessary to forbid private individuals, under the penalty of excommunication, from meddling in public affairs, or approaching the government directly on any matter which was the concern of the community at large.

The only penalty by which it was possible for the community to secure obedience to its regulations was that of excommunication. Almost every important communal ordinance, whether concerned with taxation or with any other branch of organization, generally included a clause threatening this penalty in case of disobedience. Usually, it was successful in its object, there being a common dread of the curse, even though its terms were general and the question lay between a man and his own conscience. Sometimes, however, it would be pronounced in specific terms, when it must have been all the more effective. It deprived a man of all human intercourse. None might speak to him or enter into relation with him. He was not to be counted amongst the regular quorum for prayer. If he desired to marry, no one would dare to perform the ceremony; if a child were born to him, it would have to remain uncircumcised; if a death occurred in the family, the body could not be laid to rest in consecrated ground. At a period when the orbit

of Jewish life was restricted almost entirely within the community, such a penalty was terrible in the extreme; and cases in which a person held out under such circumstances were virtually unknown. The ceremony must have been an awe-inspiring one. The notables of the community assembled in one of the synagogues. The ark was opened. Black candles were lighted. The ram's horn was sounded, as on the major solemnities of the Jewish year. Amid this ghastly ceremonial, one of the Rabbis (chosen by lot, in order to avoid any semblance of individual responsibility) read out the terrible terms of the ban, which were subsequently repeated elsewhere about the Ghetto.

As being a spiritual function, a general control over Jewish excommunications was claimed by the ecclesiastical authorities. In 1561, however, the Patriarch (the highest dignitary of the Venetian Church) empowered any three Rabbis and five out of the seven lay heads of the community to pronounce the ban on their own responsibility. However, the system easily lent itself to abuse. The extreme penalty was sometimes imposed in cases comparatively trivial; and it was obviously actuated in certain instances by petty internal jealousies. Complaints to the authorities at the suit of the injured party became rife, and there was frequently occasion to order the revocation of some ban too temerariously pronounced. In 1581, and again in 1606, the right to excommunicate and the internal jurisdiction which it implied was suspended. At last, in 1671, the right of supervision was taken away from the Patriarch,

and vested in the *Cattaveri*, who already controlled many other aspects of Jewish life. Even now, disputes were not at an end, and within the Ghetto conflicts between the lay and the ecclesiastical arm continued. This culminated in 1752 in a veritable rabbinical rebellion. On January 24th of that year, rather than pronounce a sentence of excommunication which they peculiarly abhorred, all the five Rabbis resigned in a body, after first calling in a notary to register their action formally. A certain Abraham Pacifici accepted office in their stead, and obediently carried out what was demanded. It is an interesting example of the conflict between Church and State which even the Ghetto could not exclude.

There was one respect in which the government found the institution peculiary useful. The Jews were prohibited by law from dealing in any new commodities, with the result that the secondhand trade of Venice became overwhelmingly concentrated in the Ghetto. Inevitably, therefore, a great deal of the property which was stolen in the city was taken there to be sold. Accordingly, almost daily, the authorities sent to the Ghetto instructions to excommunicate any person who should purchase certain specified articles. It was in fact little else than a somewhat elaborate way of proclaiming the nature of property recently stolen and warning possible purchasers, like police notices sent to pawnbrokers in modern cities. There are preserved in the State Archives at Venice two volumes containing 'licenses for Excommunication,' largely in cases of this sort, extending over the years 1605 to 1794. In 1728, the

supervision of these formalities was transferred, from the overseers of the *strazzaria* (secondhand trade), in whom it had previously been vested, to the *Cattaveri.*

In the *Ghetto Nuovo* were situated the pawnbroking establishments, or loan banks, which played so important a part in the history of the community. We may imagine these banks perpetually besieged by a crowd of needy Venetians, with pledges in their hands, eager for a small advance to tide them over immediate requirements. It was for their sake that the Jewish settlement in Venice had originally been authorized, and they continued to the end to be the official pretext for the toleration extended by the government. With the progress of years, the profits derived from the banks dwindled, and finally disappeared. But the maintenance of these establishments for the relief of the poor of the city remained obligatory upon the community as a whole, even though it had degenerated from a privilege into a burden. The amount of interest chargeable was reduced from 12 per cent to 10 per cent, and ultimately down to the economically impossible level of 5 per cent. During the course of the sixteenth century, the number of the banks varied. In 1573, in consideration perhaps for the revocation of the recent edict of expulsion, the community offered a contribution of 50,000 ducats to serve as a capital for the upkeep of two banks in which loans could be made to the poor on pledges not exceeding three ducats in value. Subsequently, three more of such establishments were added. In 1591, the number was fixed at three, at which figure it subsequently

remained. At the same time, all of the other Jewish communities of the Venetian possessions (excepting only Corfu) were ordered to share the burden with that of the capital. Down to the middle of the seventeenth century, the management remained the affair of a few of the wealthier families. In 1664, in view of the heavy losses which were being incurred by reason of the low rate of interest, it became impossible for the undertaking to be continued by private enterprise. Accordingly, the management was taken over by the community as a whole, considerable sums being henceforth borrowed from time to time for upkeep. Thus the city of Venice was relieved of the necessity and expense, which obtained nearly everywhere else in Italy, of maintaining for the benefit of the poor a *Monte di Pietà*, or charitable pawnbroking establishment, at the public expense.

Down to the beginning of the nineteenth century, therefore, the banks remained a characteristic and inseparable feature of the Ghetto. As late as 1786, in an official compilation of Venetian law, a stout volume of some five hundred pages was devoted to regulations concerning the Ghetto banks and their management. In number, as has been seen, they were three, chromatically known as the Green, the Yellow, and the Red. It was incumbent upon them to make loans on the security of pledges up to the amount of three ducats, or, in exceptional cases, twice that sum. The interest chargeable was limited to 5 per cent, to which was subsequently added a small initial charge. The current rate had to be indicated upon

a large tablet which was to be displayed within the bank in a prominent position. A pawn ticket, bearing the date, the amount, and a description of the article in question was issued for each transaction. Every banker was supposed to make a deposit of the sum of 5,000 ducats as a security for the proper conduct of his affairs. The establishments were to be kept open continually during those hours when access to the Ghetto was possible, excepting upon Sabbaths and festivals and public holydays. If this obligation was not punctually carried out, all of the shops had to be closed, and no Jew was allowed to stir beyond the gates; while a heavy fine was imposed. The nature of the pledges which might be received; procedure in case of fire or theft or plague; the internal control of the establishments; the numbers of the staffs; and the keeping of the accounts, were all minutely regulated. Besides the ordinary Jewish employees, a couple of Christian clerks had to be present continually during business hours (naturally, at the expense of the Jews) in order to supervise the conduct of affairs.

After a lapse of thirteen months, unredeemed pledges were sold by public auction at the Rialto, any profit on the transaction being returned to the original owners, while losses were of course borne by the banks. Touting for custom at the Ghetto gates was strictly forbidden; the *molecchini* (as they were called) being liable to be flogged round the Ghetto and imprisoned for six months. In the banks, the community had to maintain a capital of 100,000 ducats, increased subsequently to twice that amount.

This sum, very considerable for those days, remained unproductive. Each year, moreover, it had to be made up again to the required minimum by the community, which was obliged to make good any losses incurred by the banking establishments. As time went on, the annual deficit became greater and greater. Thus, over the period of five years between 1793 and 1798, despite a reduced turnover, there was an adverse balance of nearly 7,000 ducats on total transactions to the amount of little more than 55,000. The banks were intended exclusively to satisfy the requirements of the Christian poor. Destitute Jews were rigorously excluded by statute from the benefits of the institution which their coreligionists had to maintain at such ruinous expense!

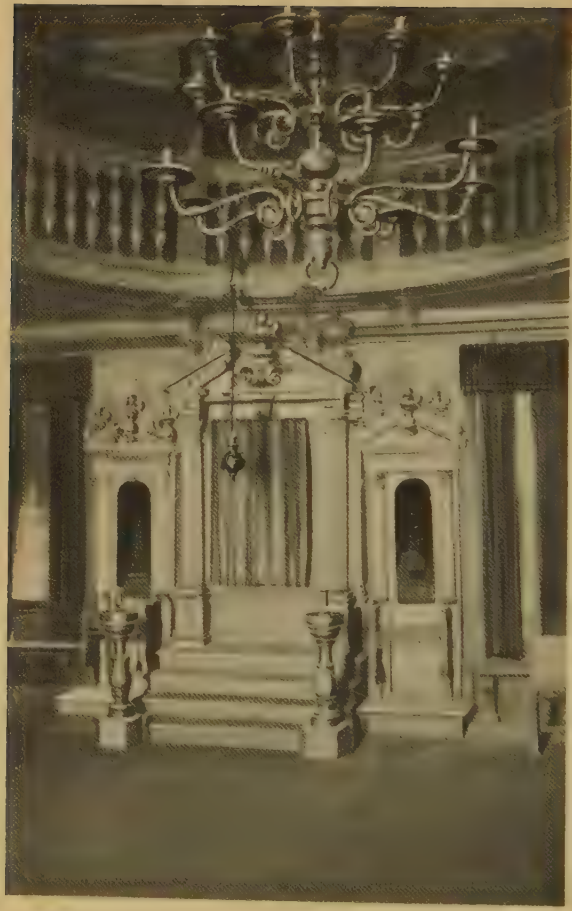
Life in the Ghetto was of course grouped about, though by no means confined to, the synagogues; and it was these that formed the main object of the pilgrimage of every visitor to the place. According to an ancient legend, a couple of Jewish places of worship, the ruins of which long remained visible, had existed on the *Giudecca* in the early medieval period for the use of the Levantine merchants who congregated there. No doubt, during their brief period of residence from 1366 to 1395, the official money lending Jewish community had been empowered to maintain their synagogues. On their expulsion in 1395, the existence of these had inevitably come to an end; and the Venetian Republic made an effort to rid itself of the contamination of Jewish houses of prayer as well as of those who had frequented them. In 1408, it was prohibited for the

Jews resident in the city to hold service in houses belonging to Christians. In 1426, the maintenance of synagogues was again forbidden. No doubt those whose business called them to the city had to content themselves with informal services in complete privacy, while on the more solemn occasions of the Jewish year they retired to Mestre, where the Jewish settlement with all of its necessary accompaniments was fully authorized, and where (according to a visitor of 1483) there was a beautiful synagogue.

When the disorders of the mainland drove the Jews of Mestre to take refuge in Venice, and the settlement was again officially authorized, the prohibition against holding public worship continued; excepting for the high festivals of 1513, when official permission was obtained from the Government. Even after the community was firmly established, and the Jews were confined in a separate quarter, the prohibition was expressly confirmed, the synagogue of Mestre still having to serve on special occasions for the community of Venice as well. However, under the new conditions it was impossible to continue so intolerant an attitude. The change of policy probably dates from the revocation of the edict of expulsion of 1527, since it was in the following year that the oldest of the Venetian synagogues was founded. Before the century was over, each of the various national groups in the Venetian Ghetto had its own place of worship; in the case of the Germans, who were the most numerous, more than one. The differences between them were of no great importance; even the pronunciation of Hebrew, which

elsewhere forms one of the greatest bars between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, was identical, all following the Italian variant of the mode favored by the latter. However, a natural desire to preserve the various ancestral hymns, customs and melodies rendered this separation for the purposes of divine worship natural. It was thus by no means schismatic in object. It must be remembered, too, that the Jewish population was so great as to render the general use of a single synagogue out of the question, while the erection of one of any size would have been regarded by the government as a piece of blasphemous presumption. The congestion was relieved by numbers of private synagogues originally established by wealthy families in their own houses, and sometimes attaining in the end a quasi-public character. These were all, or almost all, of the German rite, the followers of which easily exceeded all the other sections of the population in numbers, though not in wealth and general importance.

The Venetian synagogues, like the places of worship of all of the Christian religious associations at Venice, were generally known as *scuole*, or schools, a term corresponding to the homely German *Schul*, and one which accentuates, albeit only casually, the educational aspects of the true Jewish place of worship. In Venice, as elsewhere in the northeastern corner of Italy, the synagogues were constructed according to the same characteristic architectural model. The building is long and narrow, with rows of benches facing one another down the aisle. At the east end, according to the usual custom,



Interior of the German Synagogue in Venice. Founded 1529

is the ark of the Law. But the reading desk, instead of being in the center of the building, as is generally the case, is set high up against the west wall, access being gained by two flights of steps, one on either side. The women sat isolated in a gallery, behind a close grill.

The oldest of the Venetian synagogues, the Great Synagogue of the German rite (*Scuola Grande Tedesca*), was founded in 1529, but is now no longer open for regular worship. It is situated at the far corner of the *Ghetto Nuovo*, the original quarter assigned to the Jewish bankers, who were mostly of German origin. An indication of its extreme antiquity is to be seen in the fact that the famous Friday evening hymn of Solomon Alkabez, "Beloved, come to meet the Bride," is never chanted here, since it was founded before the poem in question was composed. Though the other Venetian synagogues, more subject to external influence, ultimately allowed it to be introduced, here it was never permitted to gain a footing. Though repeatedly enlarged and restored, this building still preserves its original character.

It was not long before the accommodation was found inadequate; and the Cantoni family founded close to it a further house of worship following the same rite, in 1532. The *Scuola Canton*, as it was called, was of very considerable magnificence; and artistically it ranks high amongst the Venetian synagogues as regards both its architecture and its appurtenances. This was radically restored in 1859. By the side of these two is the abandoned Italian synagogue, raised up on a pillared portico, with a

tablet outside suitably inscribed in token of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem. This was established in 1575, but dates in its present form from the following century.

On the segregation of the Levantine and Ponentine merchants in the *Ghetto Vecchio*, not much time elapsed before they made similar provision for the conducting of divine worship according to their own rites. The two synagogues, the services in which differed only in insignificant details, face one another on opposite sides of the little *Campiello delle Scuole*. Both of them date from the middle of the sixteenth century, though subsequently restored. The *Scuola Spagnuola*, where many Marrano fugitives made their first experience of real Judaism, was founded in 1584. In 1635, it was enlarged and radically restored under the direction of Longhena, the most eminent Venetian architect of his day, whose magnificent Church of S. Maria della Salute (erected at the entrance to the Grand Canal in thanksgiving for the cessation of the plague of 1630) is one of the most prominent features of the Lagoon. This was the largest and most magnificent of the Venetian synagogues, and bears eloquent testimony to the wealth and taste of the cultured devotees who erected it. The external simplicity contrasts strikingly with the magnificence of the interior and the general tendencies of the architect, and is an object lesson in the modest and unassuming attitude which the Jew of the Ghetto period was forced to adopt in his dealings with the outside world. This building, which is now the official synagogue of the Venetian

community, was restored somewhat unfortunately in 1838 and 1894. Opposite this is the *Scuola Levantina*, which dates from about the same period, though subsequently restored. Of all the Venetian synagogues, of unsual beauty and interest, it is this which retains to the greatest degree its characteristic charm. The reading desk is a masterpiece of the woodcarver's art; with its characteristic twisted columns (in the traditional form of those in the Temple of Solomon) and the two huge candlesticks in the form of cornucopiae branching out in front. The ceiling is little inferior in beauty. This synagogue is still in use today for week-day services. On the ground floor is the present locale of the *Scuola Luzzatto*, used now only for the recital of memorial prayers. Originally, it was one of the many private synagogues in Venice (all, as it happens, of the German rite), having been founded by one of the Luzzatto family in his own house in the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth, when the building was found to be in a dangerous condition, it was transferred to its present position. Another of the private synagogues, now disappeared, is the *Scuola Meshullamim*, belonging to the Meshullam (Del Banco) family, which was destroyed in the course of structural alterations, in the *Ghetto Nuovo* in 1896; the old doorway, surmounted by an appropriate Hebrew inscription, is all that now remains to recall its existence and the glories of the family which founded it. Of the *Scuola Cohanim*, established and supported by the Cohen family, not even so much remains. The last of the private oratories to disappear was the *Midrash Vivanti*,

founded by Jacob Hai Vivante as late as 1853. The synagogues were maintained principally from seat rentals and private donations, ordinary taxation being devoted to defraying the public obligations of the community. The number of seats was strictly limited, and to possess one was an enviable privilege. They were accordingly treated as the personal property of the occupants, passing from father to son by inheritance, or sometimes being left by will. The same was the case with membership in one or two of the Ghetto confraternities.

It was in the synagogues that the religious life of the Venetian Jews centered. Their use was not restricted to the Sabbath. Every morning, before sunrise, the Ghetto would be aroused by the beadle of the confraternity *Shomerim la-Boker* (Watchers for the Morning), who went round from house to house knocking at the doors and summoning the members to arouse themselves. A few minutes later, they assembled at the synagogue, dimly lit by tallow candles, to recite special hymns before the beginning of the ordinary service. They were not, however, the earliest comers; for some time previous, an hour or more before dawn, the 'Mourners of Zion' would have assembled, seated barefoot on the ground, to recite, by the flickering light of the perpetual lamp, dirges for the loss of Jerusalem. Gradually the synagogue would fill, as more and more worshipers arrived to recite their private devotions. At sunrise, the morning service would begin. The prayers were conducted with a semi-Oriental fervor and with general participation, in striking contrast to the

calm detachment of contemporary church worship; "not by a sober, distinct, and orderly reading," as an English visitor of 1608 expresses it, "but by an exceeding loud yaling, undecent roaring, and as it were a beastly bellowing of it forth." At the close of the service, many remained behind for the purpose of study, immemorially associated with worship in Jewish life. Provision was made for late comers to service as well as for early arrivals. Each synagogue was provided with an *Azarah*, or anteroom, in which the tardy would assemble until they numbered a quorum sufficient for public service. Thus all disturbance of the divine worship was avoided—a manifest proof that the disorder which some Christian observers noted was the outcome of excess of zeal, and not of lack of devotion, as they often imagined. The morning service was reckoned as the general meeting for the whole Ghetto. Accordingly, any necessary proclamations, whether civil or religious, would be read out before the people dispersed. When the service was ended, a number of persons designated by the reader remained behind as the *Ma'amad* to carry out any necessary communal works on that day—a happy adaptation of the delegation of ordinary Israelites going by that name which was always present at the time of sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem.

The services were conducted by a paid reader (*Hazzan* or Cantarino), assisted by an under-reader or *Mezammer*. Each synagogue also had two beadles, upon whose shoulders much of the minor communal

business rested. Included in their duties was that of acting on occasion as *nonzolo*, or Public Crier.

The Rabbi could hardly be reckoned among the synagogal functionaries. A promising scholar would generally be granted the title of 'Associate' (*Haber*) by the Rabbinate of the city on the occasion of his marriage, at the age of about eighteen or twenty. This formality customarily took place on the Sabbath day, to the accompaniment of a learned discourse, to which the novice would be expected to make a suitable reply. However, it was not usual for a person to be addressed as Rabbi before the age of thirty, while he could not exercise the full rabbinical functions until ten years later. The seven oldest Rabbis in the city formed the official court, to the presidency of which they succeeded in order of seniority. In this capacity, they licensed the publication of new works, decided matrimonial and other religious questions, and gave judgment according to the Jewish law in all cases which were submitted to them. Often, they would have to answer appeals and inquiries from other cities. However, the jealous watchfulness of the government on the one side, and on the other of the secular leaders of the community (who, as we have seen, acted as an independent arbitration court), effectively prevented the traditional tribunals in Italy from enjoying any great authority excepting on matters specifically religious. Even the power of excommunication was taken out of their hands, though they still had to serve as the mouthpiece. In 1616, the members of the Venetian Rabbinate came to a solemn agreement, pledging themselves

to resist further encroachment on the part of the lay authorities. It certainly does not seem, however, that they had the slightest success.

The Rabbinate was an honorary dignity. It was considered a glory, and not a burden, to be permitted to exercise functions so sacred; and no money could be taken in recompense therefor. The Rabbi might be a wealthy merchant, who had no need to rely upon his learning for his livelihood; or he might receive payment for acting as reader in the synagogue, or for teaching at one of the score of the studious Ghetto confraternities, or even for preaching —an activity not necessarily associated at this period with the rabbinical function. As Rabbi, however, he received nothing. It was only at the period of the decadence of the Venetian Ghetto that the essential amateur and scholarly qualifications of the Rabbi came to be neglected and that the paid *Rabbino Maggiore* became an established institution. The appointment of a new *Haber*, the first step in the Rabbinate, was considered a local prerogative. On the occasion when Isaac Levi, Leone da Modena's grandson, received from the Rabbis of other cities the dignity which (from reasons of jealousy, according to him) the local authorities were loth to impart, all recognition of it was withheld in Venice. There followed a long dispute, which left the protagonist a soured man, and which added a new work to the scanty Hebrew autobiographical literature.

The sermon was already an established institution in Italy, even in the smallest community. In Venice, it was especially cultivated. Addresses would be

delivered regularly here in all of the synagogues; but the official sermons were given in the *Scuola Spagnuola*, as being the largest. The prerogative rested, however, with the *Scuola Grande Tedesca* on the Sabbath of Penitence, between the New Year and the Day of Atonement. On the occasion of the death of any member of the community prominent for learning and piety, special memorial sermons were delivered, which were generally followed up at the expiration of one month and of one year from the date. The usual time for the weekly address was before the afternoon service on the Sabbath. The language was generally Italian, with a certain admixture of Hebrew; though in the Levantine synagogue visiting scholars from the Orient would sometimes be invited to address the congregation in Ladino, while in the Ponentine congregation Portuguese was originally used. However, the preachers' notes were generally in Hebrew; and for a long time it was in that language that any sermons which it was desired to perpetuate were published—as, for example, those of Leone da Modena and of Moses Alfalas.[17]

There was much competition among the various scholars in the Ghetto as to who should be selected to preach, and much jealousy was aroused in consequence of this. However, it was a privilege

[17] A Portuguese sermon by Raphael da Silva was published at Venice in the eighteenth century. The first of all Italian sermons to be published were, however, a couple preached by Dr. Isaac Colle in the German Synagogue on the Sabbath of Penitence in 1714 and 1715 respectively.

assigned to the most eloquent, and not necessarily to the most learned. Hence the preacher (who enjoyed an annual stipend of one hundred ducats) was seldom the official Rabbi. Elsewhere in Italy, and doubtless in Venice as well, the common Christian practice was followed, an hourglass being introduced into the pulpit to warn the preacher of the lapse of time; though there was some doubt as to the permissibility of its use on the Sabbath.

The scope of the sermons delivered in the Ghetto was remarkable. They tended to educate as well as to inspire. In them, the assimilation of the Hebraic and Italian cultures so characteristic of local life was plainly mirrored. The Greek, Latin, and Italian classics would be quoted as well as the Jewish. Aristotle and even Vergil would be cited with almost as much respect as the Mishnah and Maimonides.

The Jews of Venice enjoyed a very high reputation for their eloquence, and Christians made a point of coming to hear the sermons delivered in the synagogues. During the heyday of the Ghetto, the audience of a gifted preacher often comprised the élite of the city—priests, envoys, patricians, with sometimes even a visiting prince. Generally, the visitors came to admire. Sometimes, however, their attitude was not quite so friendly. On one occasion in the middle of the seventeenth century, a certain monk named Lucosino so objected to what he heard that he went to the authorities and denounced the whole of the proceedings. Accordingly, instructions were issued that in future no Jewish preacher should presume to speak while there was a Gentile present,

or should under any circumstances touch upon matters of faith in his sermon. This regulation does not, however, seem to have been rigorously obeyed. In 1663, Philip Skippon, an English traveler who visited Venice during the course of the Grand Tour, heard a sermon delivered in the Ghetto on the subject of Jacob, of which he has recorded his impressions; and he notes as a matter of interest that the preacher's head was covered. As late as the second half of the eighteenth century, when in many respects conditions had radically changed, the phenomenon of the earlier epoch was repeated, priests and patricians coming to the Ghetto in large numbers whenever any Rabbi particularly renowned for his eloquence was expected to preach.

The religious life of each week reached its climax on the Sabbath day. On Friday afternoon, a change began to come over the Ghetto. The hurly-burly of the working days gradually decreased. The neighboring streets became crowded with red-hatted figures, hastening home. An hour before sunset, a trumpeter specially engaged for the occasion would blow a fanfare in the *Ghetto Nuovo* as a sign to the people to cease work. At the same time, the Rabbis assembled together and went round the Ghetto to see that preparations were made for the day of rest. The same formalities were repeated half an hour, and again three quarters of an hour afterwards. This was the last warning. From now on, all of the shops were closed; and, before long, the synagogues were crowded with devout worshipers, intent on welcoming the Sabbath Bride. For the next

twenty-four hours, all business was at a standstill. The banks were closed and shuttered. It was useless for any Gentile, however pressing his needs, to come to the Ghetto to raise money. The laws even guaranteed that no Jew could be summoned to court.

Though it was generally forbidden for a Jew to have Christian servants in his employment, the authorities had the humanity to permit an exception (though in the case of men only, and not of women) for the purpose of kindling lights, building the fire, and performing other necessary labors traditionally prohibited to Jews upon that day, a license which, with an exaggeration of cruelty, was withheld in the papal States. Throughout the day, a procession of needy Christians would be incessantly passing through the Ghetto, calling: "*Chi vuole appicciare il fuoco?*". They would be rewarded for this minor service by crusts and morsels of food, since it was forbidden to handle money on the day of rest. Thus the period remained one of perfect repose, varied only by the round of services in the synagogue, the frequent courses of study, and the lengthy sermon in the afternoon.

The Jewish year reached its culmination in the great autumn solemnities of the New Year and the Day of Atonement. Close on their heels came the Feast of Tabernacles, when the Ghetto was for once made bright and verdant by the booths which were erected everywhere in the streets. The last day of the series, the Rejoicing of the Law, came to be observed as a sort of carnival, encouraging a reaction against the high-wrought religious tension of the past weeks.

The synagogues, decorated with rich hangings and brilliantly illuminated, were kept open all night long. Patricians and gentlefolk came to the Ghetto in considerable numbers with their wives to see the decorations. The girls and young married women masked themselves, and went round from synagogue to synagogue. Within, there were scenes of the utmost gaiety. Special hymns were chanted, some to stately old Spanish tunes brought from the Peninsula by the exiles. Meanwhile, many of the congregation endeavored to supply the want of instrumental music by performing all of the motions of formal musicians to accompany the singing. There was one occasion when an orchestra was introduced on this festival into the Spanish synagogue. In consequence of this, the press of people, both Jews and Christians, became so great that it was necessary to call in the police to keep order at the doors. The only instrument caviled at was the organ, which was ordered to be removed, as being a too obvious imitation of the usage in Christian churches. However, this was a unique phenomenon, and the experiment was never repeated.

The Jews of Venice had buried their dead from time immemorial on the Lido—that flat sand bank, now a popular summer resort, which protects Venice from the force of the Adriatic. Here, as early as 1386, a piece of ground near the Benedictine monastery had been conceded by the government to two Jews representing the community, to serve as a last resting-place for their people. Two years and a half later, they were empowered to surround it with a simple

fence in order to obviate the desecration of the graves, which had become common. In the subsequent period, any Jew who died at Venice was buried in the cemetery at Mestre. However, on the reëstablishment of the community, use began to be made of the Lido once more. The original parcel of ground was enlarged in 1578 and on various subsequent occasions. During the Turkish War, in 1671, the island was fortified, and the Jewish rights were interrupted for a short time. The disturbance was, however, only a brief one. It was here, under the cypresses, that the Jews continued to bury their dead down to recent times, in one of the most picturesquely situated 'Houses of Life' in the world (the modern cemetery, opened towards the end of the last century, is only a few yards off). Here lie buried all of the great figures of the Venetian Ghetto: Elias Levita, Leone da Modena, Simone Luzzatto, and a score more. A majority of the epitaphs are in Hebrew, being composed by the local poetasters in that ingenious and involved form of Hebrew rhyme which was then usual, though to modern ears it hardly seems adapted to so solemn a purpose. Others are in Spanish or Portuguese, surmounted in some cases by the nobiliary crests which were borne by the Marrano families in the Peninsula. Among the others, many bore more formal symbols. Thus upon the grave of a Cohen would be represented a pair of hands outspread in the priestly benediction; upon that of a Levi, the ewer which he was privileged to use to lave the hands of the priest before he blessed the people. One or two of the epitaphs, real

linguistic peculiarities, are in polyglot rhyme, lines occurring alternately in Hebrew, Italian and Spanish, a device, as it would seem to us, more ingenious than reverent. The marble of these monuments is in some cases as white, and the characters upon it as clear, as on the day when they were erected.

It was regarded as a pious duty to accompany a body part of the way at least to the last resting place. Upon the bier of a Rabbi or learned man, copies of the books which he had compiled would be placed. If any person died by violence, the coffin would be covered by his blood-stained clothing. In the case of a person of special eminence, the corpse would be conveyed first to the synagogue where he had worshiped during his life, and placed upon a catafalque, while a memorial sermon was delivered. Thence it would be accompanied by the whole Jewish population to the gates of the Ghetto. Then, followed by at least ten intimate mourners, it was conveyed to the Lido upon a gondola—a mode of transport which occasionally caused the rabbinical authorities some perplexity; for example, when the funeral took place upon a holyday, when the use of any such conveyance was forbidden. There is extant in a register at the State Archives in Venice a caricature of a seventeenth century Jewish funeral, drawn by some idle clerk better endowed with leisure than with reverence. All arrangements for the funeral were supervised by the *Hebrat Gemillut Hasadim* attached to each community, which emulated the last 'kindness' which Jacob the patriarch craved from his son. Some persons left instructions

for their bodies to be taken ultimately to Palestine for burial in its sacred soil, the interment at the Lido being in such cases only temporary.

For the entertainment of visitors in the Ghetto, special provision was made. Within certain limitations, private generosity could be counted upon. In Treviso, however, in the fifteenth century, the president of the congregation would draw from an urn tickets assigning poor wayfarers to various homes by lot, in order to prevent evasion. This method perhaps obtained in Venice also at the period. Later, however, with the growth in the size of the community and the restrictions upon space imposed by the Ghetto, such a system became impossible. Hence there came into existence the Ghetto hospice or *Hekdesh*, half hospital and half inn, which would receive the indigent stranger for a few days free of charge. This was maintained by the voluntary offerings of the charitable, the beadle going round at intervals with a collecting box to receive contributions. When the stranger left, he would be speeded on his way by the *Hebrat Zedah la-Derek*, which would provide him with food and a coin or two for his sustenance until he reached the next city. Exceptionally deserving cases would be equipped also with a letter of introduction signed or countersigned by all of the Rabbis of the community, recommending the bearer to the good offices and munificence of their fellow Jews. This would be the lot, especially, of persons fallen in fortune who desired to collect money to dower a daughter, to ransom some imprisoned relative, or the like. For the more

affluent, every Italian Ghetto had a recognised Inn, or Guest House. That of Venice was situated from 1792 in a building in the *Ghetto Vecchio*, though no doubt there were other houses which also served for the same purpose. Before being admitted, each stranger had to obtain a license from the *Esecutori alla Bestemmia*, whose business it was to keep the city free from any taint of disbelief. More distinguished visitors, such as Rabbis from the Holy Land, could of course count upon private hospitality, notwithstanding the lack of space; and there would be considerable competition for the privilege of entertaining them during the course of their stay.

The scholastic system, at Venice as elsewhere, was, more than perhaps anything else, characteristically wide and comprehensive, a credit to the Jewish genius. The wealthier persons engaged tutors—sometimes men of very considerable scholarship—to live in their houses and instruct their children. The subjects taught included not only Hebrew and Jewish lore, but also Italian, and, in some cases, Latin as well. Music and dancing were generally included in the curriculum, and so were often taught, paradoxically enough, by persons famous for their rabbinical attainments! It was not uncommon for lessons to be given in versification, both in Hebrew and in the vernacular. The great classics of Italian literature—Dante, Petrarch, and Ariosto—were not neglected, and they were fully as familiar in the Ghetto as outside. The fundamental philosophical writings of the classical world were accessible both in the originals and in the ancient Hebrew transla-

tions. This extraordinary range of learning could not be the lot of every child. Nevertheless, the Ghetto knew a good educational system centuries before such an idea had become diffused elsewhere. Each 'nation' maintained its own school, into which any child, boy or girl, might enter free of charge. Enrollment was not indeed compulsory; but there was no need for it to be, since the conceivability of withholding education from his children was absolutely alien to the Jew, however humble his circumstances. In a strikingly modern spirit, the number of pupils in each class was carefully regulated. Meals were given to the most needy. A society for 'clothing the naked' distributed clothing to the poorer pupils as well as to needy teachers, a special collection for the purpose being made each year at the Hanukkah feast. Not that this public educational system was purely religious in character, though it was regarded as a fundamental moral obligation; for even at the public schools the vernacular was taught as well as Jewish subjects. In consequence, at a period when illiteracy was generally rampant, in the Ghetto it was exceptional, if not unknown.

Arrival at manhood did not mark the end to study. Adult education was taken as a matter of course amongst Jews centuries before the conception had become comprehensible to the outside world. Every synagogue had attached to it voluntary associations for the purpose of study, to whom the greatest scholars of the period would regularly expound the classical Jewish texts. Wealthy enthusiasts would establish regular courses of instruc-

tion in their own houses, engaging some well-known savant to teach. One of these amateur academies, set up by the wealthy Calonymus Belgrado, held its meetings in a garden, under the open skies. Not an evening passed on which no class was held; and study was reckoned an integral part of the sabbatical delights.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, a Talmudic academy was established in the little city of Conegliano at the expense of the Venetian community. Hither pupils came from all over Italy, especially from those places under papal rule, where Jewish scholarship was impeded. As long as they continued their studies without intermission, they were supported free of all charge—a prototype of that free university education which still remains, in most countries, merely an ideal.

The confraternities for the promotion of education formed only a fraction of a whole network of similar voluntary associations by which the whole of Ghetto life, social and religious, was covered. There were innumerable *Hebrot* with purely spiritual objects—for fasting and confession and nocturnal prayer, to avert the divine wrath and to hasten the coming of the Messiah. By the side of these, there were many associations with a purely humanitarian scope. There was, as we have seen, the *Hebrat Malbish 'Arumim* for providing poor pupils at the public schools with clothing. Another, the *Hebrat Somek Nofelim*, paid the rent for the destitute; the *Hebrat Mattir Assurim* succored, and if possible released, those that were imprisoned for debt; the *Hebrat*

Zedah la-Derek speeded poor strangers on their way; while the *Hebrah la-'Aniyye ha-'Ir* acted as a sort of local Board of Guardians for native paupers. There was an association to succor women in childbirth, and one to introduce boy babies into the Covenant of Abraham. In every case of want, the unfortunate could count upon the assistance of his neighbors at every turn in one capacity or another. If a man fell ill, the *Hebrat Bikkur Holim*—the Confraternity for Visiting the Sick—came to console him. When he died, one association looked after the mourners, while another took charge of the arrangements for the funeral. There were few emergencies for which no provision was made.

Not all of these associations were, however, charitable in object. Some of them corresponded more closely to the modern Friendly Society. Noteworthy amongst them was the Society for Dowering the Brides (*Hebra de cazar orphãos*) attached to the Ponentine community. This was founded in the year 1613, when the regulations were approved by the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*.[18] It was composed of fifty members, each of whom had to pay the sum of fifty ducats. The original members comprised, besides natives of Venice, many individuals belonging to the great Marrano communities of Pisa, Hamburg, Amsterdam, and even Lyons. Membership was perpetual, and passed on from father to son by inheritance, or else could be left by will. The beneficiaries were drawn from all of the great

[18] Among the earliest members was Isaac Israeli, an ancestor of Lord Beaconsfield.

Sephardic communities of the age, as far afield as Safed and Belgrade. The daughters of impoverished members had a prior claim upon the charity of the society; other names were balloted upon. The most fortunate received dowries of three hundred ducats in gold; the others, in silver. Among those elected with full votes during the seventeenth century was the daughter of a Marrano burned in Rome 'for the sanctification of the name' and a certain proselytess, Esther, 'daughter of Abraham our Father', who was subsequently martyred— distant echos of some obscure forgotten tragedy of religious persecution.

This association, like many other institutions of the Ponentine Community at Venice, was widely imitated, both in the city and outside. Its rules excluded rigorously from its benefits all who did not belong to the Castilian or Portuguese 'nation.' Accordingly, the Levantines followed suit, founding in 1653 a similar association for their own members, with benefits however only one-third as great in amount. The German 'nation' (which since 1531 had been able to avail itself of the munificent legacy left by Vita del Banco of Padua for the purpose of assisting dowerless brides) established its organization similarly in the second half of the seventeenth century. Even outside Venice, the local association was widely imitated. Thus that founded at Leghorn a few years later confessedly copied its statutes.

All of the other voluntary associations were outdone in importance and in interest by the *Hebrat Pidyon Shebuyim*, the Confraternity for the Redemp-

tion of Captives. In 1648, when the whole of Eastern Europe was flooded with Polish Jews sold into slavery by the Cossack Chmielnicki and his hordes, the charitable brothers Aboab at Venice started a fund for the purpose of ransoming their unfortunate coreligionists when the opportunity arose. By 1683 it had attained such success as to be described as the most wealthy and highly regarded amongst the Jewish associations in the city. The range of the society's activities was immense. Prisoners in the constant wars on the mainland of Italy, or as far afield as Hungary and Poland; slaves rowing in the galleys in the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian seas, from Marseilles and Elba to Corfu and Zante—sometimes, at Venice itself; victims of the Cossacks to the north and of the Tartars to the east; unfortunate souls groaning in servitude in distant Persia or on the Barbary coast—all turned for succor to the *Parnassim dos Cautivos* in Venice, certain to receive sympathy and, if it were humanly possible, deliverance. But the vast majority of the work of the association was concerned with the Jewish prisoners captured by the Knights of St. John on their predatory expeditions against Turkish shipping, and brought into the island of Malta to be sold into slavery—a shameful abuse which continued down to the period of the French Revolution.

The organization was under the auspices of the Levantine and Portuguese congregations; the German 'nation,' though its members contributed liberally to the fund, took no official share in its labors. This was not due to any lack of solidarity.

The reason was that the two Sephardic communities were in close social and commercial relations with the Levant, and traveled more by sea, being thus most intimately concerned. For its funds, the association depended only partially on benevolence. Voluntary donations came in of course from Venice and other cities, as the fame of the association and the report of the good work which it was doing spread (Philip Skippon, in 1663, heard offerings made for the purpose in the synagogue). The Hamburg community even established an auxiliary society, under the title *Camara de Cautivos de Veneza*, with its special treasurer or *Gabbai*. On occasion of great urgency, the confraternity would appeal for help to communities as far afield as London, Bordeaux, and Amsterdam. But all of this was regarded as extraordinary income. The ordinary came in as a matter of business rather than of charity. In the first place, the members of the confraternity paid into its funds a certain proportion of their annual profits. But above all, a special tax of one-quarter per cent was levied on all goods despatched from Venice to Jewish correspondents in the Levant, and one-eighth per cent on all goods taken away in person. It was, as a matter of fact, a species of insurance; and, whenever the fund was interfered with, trade with Turkey was adversely affected.

Communications in the Mediterranean at this period were slow and precarious. Sometimes a letter took two or three months in transmission from Venice to Malta. It was therefore necessary to have someone on the spot to represent the

fraternity. Under the Knights, the exclusion of the Jews from the island was not indeed absolute. They were admitted, however, only temporarily, and under great restrictions. But the Venetian merchants had local correspondents who were willing enough to do them a service, and a succession of these acted as 'consuls' on their behalf. They had the right to charge a commission of five piasters for every slave liberated through their offices, but did not always avail themselves of it. "All the greater will be your merit before God," wrote the grateful *Deputados* (as the wardens of the association were called in Spanish), to their representative on one occasion, "and by Him will you be rewarded all the more, these being of a nation diverse from your own."

When the Maltese galleys returned from a marauding expedition, the 'consul' would visit the prison to see whether any Jews were among the captives. Frequently there were—usually peaceful merchants who had been sailing quietly between Levantine ports, or sometimes even pilgrims on their way to Palestine. To satisfy their immediate needs, the agent would give them a small sum on behalf of the confraternity, besides a small allowance each week. They were housed in a special room taken for them in the *bagnio* or prison, to which they returned each night after the forced labors of the day—often shamefully excessive. Meanwhile, word was sent to Venice to inform the *Deputados* of the number and quality of the new arrivals and of the sums demanded for their release. When a single individual was in question, there might be enough

in hand to ransom him straightway; the agent was indeed empowered to spend up to a certain amount on his own responsibility, without further reference. When a whole shipload came in, however, it was necessary to have recourse to all sides to collect the amount required. Often the owners, endeavoring to profit from the Jewish feelings of solidarity, demanded excessive prices for their purchases, and subjected them to the grossest illtreatment in order to stimulate the generosity of their coreligionists—sometimes, with fatal results.

Frequently, a considerable time elapsed before it was possible to release the wretched captives. Consequently, through the majority of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was at Malta a veritable community of slaves. There was an old authorization permitting them to have their cemetery and place of worship in the room taken for their use in the prison. Scrolls of the Law and Hebrew books would be sent out from Italy. An oven was even provided where they could bake their unleavened bread for Passover. All of this was done at the expense of the *Hebrat Pidyon Shebuyim* of Venice, and under the supervision of the generous-hearted Catholic man of affairs who acted as their local representative. It is as remarkable and as pathetic a story as the whole of Jewish history can provide.

With the advance of the eighteenth century, conditions at Malta did not much improve. However, the community of Venice was now in its decadence, and no longer enjoyed its former preëminence. Similar bodies were organized in all of the

other great Marrano centers of western Europe, lessening the calls upon Venice and, at the same time, its claim to the bounty of the generous. The community of Leghorn in particular was rapidly increasing in wealth and importance, and becoming more and more interested in the Levantine trade. Hence the society in that port gradually took over the functions of the parent body in Venice which, by the middle of the eighteenth century, had lost all of its previous importance. However, its example had been of immense importance in the organization of relief, and left behind it a durable memorial of Jewish benevolence at the highest.

CHAPTER V

LIFE IN THE GHETTO

To live in the Venetian Ghetto, at the height of its fame, was in itself a liberal education. Despite the high walls that surrounded it, there was here none of that isolation from outside interests and outside influences which characterized the normal contemporary community. The foreign intercourse which the Ghetto enjoyed was alone sufficient to break down any sense of insularity. Traders from every city of Italy frequented it for purposes of business, bringing with them the latest news of the Jewish world: how there had been, in Rome, a new scandal of kidnaping followed by forcible baptism, or how the Rabbis of Ferrara were engaged in some hair-splitting dispute, in which opinions had been sought from as far off as Amsterdam and Constantinople. Grave merchants from Leghorn would create some envy by telling of their own ample toleration and remarkable privileges; while others from the papal States would refer wistfully to the comparative freedom from oppression which Venetian Jewry enjoyed, sarcastically comparing their own yellow hats with the scarlet ones locally worn. Marrano refugees from Spain and Portugal, who had come to revert to the religion of their fathers under the protection of the Lion of S. Marco, would have enthralling tales to tell of their hair-breadth escapes from the toils of the

Inquisition. There would be a constant stream of visitors from Germany, and even from as far afield as Russia and Poland: uncouth figures, these last, revered for their legendary Talmudic prowess but generally unintelligible, speaking as they did nothing but an incomprehensible German jargon and a mispronounced Hebrew. These were especially common in the period following on 1648, when the whole of Europe was flooded with refugees from the terrible Cossack massacres; while in 1670 they were reinforced by some victims of the recent expulsion from Vienna. Merchants from Prague—familiar figures, who perhaps made the journey every few months—would tell the latest story of their wonder-working Rabbi. Jostling with these would be turbaned visitors from the Moslem countries of the Mediterranean littoral, bringing with them, perhaps, the ritual of welfare of the Grand Turk.

Visitors would come, too, from the great Sephardic congregations of the North—Amsterdam, London, and especially Hamburg, with which place Venice was in peculiarly close relations. Sometimes, in the eighteenth century, there may even have been an occasional visitor from the English colonies in North America—a shrewd merchant, perhaps, of Newport or of Charleston, who was combining the Grand Tour of Europe with business enterprise. Delegates would come regularly from foreign communities collecting money for some pious object—the redemption of captives, or the dowering of the orphan daughter of some dead scholar. Young men on their way to study medicine at the University of Padua would stop here

on their journey, bearing letters of recommendation to the local scholars from some world-famous rabbinical authority north of the Alps, accompanied perhaps by an inquiry about abstruse points of Jewish law. Sometimes, there would arrive a travel-worn visitor from even further afield, who brought strange tales of isolated communities in the remote countries of the Orient. In 1572, for example, at the request of the king of Portugal, the Doge assisted on his way a certain Jew named Samuel Jacar, of Ormuz in India, who was bearing important despatches to the Emperor. At all times, there might be seen anxious groups of pilgrims from all over Europe awaiting the departure of a vessel bound for the Holy Land, and perhaps bearing with them the ashes of their fathers for burial in the sacred soil. At times of stress or of excitement, there would be a continual coming and going of representatives from foreign communities desirous of coördinating measures to meet an imminent new peril, or of collecting opinions and information with regard to some fresh pseudo-Messiah who had arisen in the Levant.

A constant link with Palestine and the outside world was provided in particular by the delegates who came each year collecting money on behalf of the four Holy Communities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, and Safed: stately greybeards, chosen for their learning and their eloquence, for the privilege of entertaining whom there would be eager competition. One of them, the illustrious Hayim Joseph David Azulai, who visited half of Europe for this

purpose in the middle of the eighteenth century, has left a graphic account of his visits and of the consideration with which he was received. Indeed, self-taxation on behalf of the Holy Land (of the desolation of which there was a constant reminder in a blank, unlimed patch outside the Italian synagogue) was considered by the Jews of Venice a privilege, and not a burden. In the seventeenth century, it was decided to make an annual levy upon all Venetian Jews of half a ducat a head to be sent to Palestine, as the equivalent of the ancient poll-tax of a half-shekel dedicated to the Temple. The Ponentine community substituted for this in 1761 a proportionate levy of one twentieth per cent upon all commercial transactions carried out by its members. Even at the period of their greatest economic stress, a certain sum of money was set aside by the community, with the approval of the government, to meet its moral obligations towards those who had gone to live in the land of the fathers.

The nomenclature of the Venetian Jews betrayed their varied origin. Some of them (Scaramella, La Motta, Della Rocca, Saltaro, Mortara, Parenzo, Archevolti, Sforno) originated from the places of those names in Italy, all of which at one time had harbored Jewish communities. The Belgrado family and others obviously hailed from the Levant. The Zarfatti were in origin French, the Tedesco German, and the Polacco and Cracovia Polish. German, too, were the Calimani (from Kalman—itself a remote corruption of the Greek καλώννμος = 'Good name,'

or *Shem Tob*), and many more.[19] Aboab (here corrupted into Aboaf), Pardo, and many others came more or less directly from Spain. Hidalgo appellations like Franco d'Almeida or Carvalho indicated descent from one of the Marrano families forced to conform to Christianity in the Iberian Peninsula. Other surnames originated in the occupation followed by the founder of the family. The first Orefice was obviously a goldsmith; while the Levi del Banco family was long associated with one of the Ghetto banks. The first names, for men, were generally Biblical. However, there were certain regular agnomens which corresponded to them, and were used in ordinary parlance. Thus Judah, in allusion to the Benediction of Moses ('Judah is a lion's whelp') was always Leone; Mordecai became Marco, or sometimes (owing to the rabbinic identification of the uncle of Esther with the prophet Malachi) Angelo. Women's names tended to be less Biblical and more picturesque by far—Diamante, Angelita, Diana, and many more.

The Italian Ghetto was not cut off from the surrounding population, as was the case elsewhere in Europe, by any fundamental linguistic divergence. Italian was the current speech. Sermons were delivered in the synagogue in that language, even though, till the eighteenth century, they would be subsequently printed—if at all—in Hebrew. Instruction was given through the same medium, on the basis of specially prepared vocabularies. Ac-

[19] According to an old tradition, the Clerli family at Venice originated in England.

counts were kept, agreements drawn up, and private letters generally written, in the language of the country. Handbooks of Jewish law and practice were published in Italian for the benefit of those who had no knowledge of Hebrew—particularly for the women. The occasional poems which were poured out in such profusion in honor of any notable marriage were frequently circulated in the vernacular. Conservative authorities deplored the fact that Hebrew was being relegated more and more to the position of a purely sacred tongue, used only for religious purposes. For wills and other official deeds, notwithstanding the intense disapproval of the learned, recourse was had to the public notaries. In spite of this, it was found necessary for the government to appoint a Public Translator to interpret marriage and other contracts on its behalf. The earliest immigrants seem to have been familiar with German. One or two books in that language were printed on their behalf in the sixteenth century; and for a considerable period longer it remained customary for them to chant the hymn *Addir Hu* on Passover Eve in an ancient vernacular version which they had brought with them across the Alps. However, of the languages spoken by the successive waves of immigrants, Spanish and Portuguese stood out the longest. It was not very long before even these succumbed; so that by the middle of the eighteenth century regulations made in those tongues had to be translated into Italian for the general comprehension.

In writing, the classical Tuscan would be used;

though in every day intercourse the local Venetian dialect deeply influenced actual speech. Nevertheless, the language spoken was not identical with that of the outside world. The growing segregation made more and more for a distinct linguistic development. There were Jewish conceptions and observances which had no secular parallel, and to describe which it was necessary to have recourse to Hebrew. The successive waves of immigration—German, Spanish, and Portuguese—all brought their contributions. Accordingly, there grew up in the Ghetto a dialect of its own, comprising each one of these elements. Hebrew roots would be given Romance endings; German words were presented in Italianized forms. Old Latin elements which had long since fallen into general disuse retained their currency. Spanish and Portuguese phrases were preserved—sometimes in complete ignorance of the fact that they were not indigenous to the country. Thus there came into existence a Judeo-Italian dialect, different only in degree from the more distinctive Judeo-German and Judeo-Spanish of northern and eastern Europe. The similarity was heightened by the fact that, like its better known sisters, Judeo-Italian was written, and occasionally printed, in Hebrew characters. There were in circulation in the Ghetto old translations of the prayer book of this description, printed at Bologna and elsewhere at the beginning of the sixteenth century; though, owing to the activity of the censorship, it was not until 1786 that Italian Jewry was provided with a proper translation of the liturgy printed in Roman characters.

Generally speaking, the Jews of Venice were conspicuous for their good looks. Thomas Coryat, an English traveler who visited the Ghetto at the beginning of the seventeenth century, speaks of them as being "goodly and proper men . . . most elegant and sweet-featured persons." As for their womenfolk, they were famous for their loveliness: "as beautiful as I ever saw," pronounced the same observer, who deemed himself a connoisseur. The women of the poorer classes, however, often suffered from diseases of the eye, through the continual stitching and sewing by artificial light which was necessitated by the narrowness of the streets and darkness of the houses. In costume, save for their distinctive headgear, there was nothing to differentiate between the Jew and his neighbor. The shaving of the beard was common, if not general. A portrait of a Ghetto aristocrat of the seventeenth century is hardly to be distinguished from that of a contemporary patrician. With women, the similarity was even more pronounced, the same visitor comparing their general appearance with that of English countesses. The only out-of-the-way costume was that of the newly-arrived Levantine merchants, who were dressed in the Turkish fashion, with long gowns girt about the middle, and turbans on their heads.

As we have seen, the economic activities of the Venetian Jews were, in law, closely confined. Officially, they were regarded as aliens. So much so was this the case that they were excluded from the advantages of Venetian diplomatic protection when

abroad. As a natural consequence, all of the protectionist theories of the period were enforced against them. Hence any attempt made by them to embark in any branch of industry was ruthlessly suppressed, an exception being made only in favor of entirely new activities which might benefit the State as a whole. It was a gross injustice; for the Jews had in many cases lived under the protection of the Lion of S. Marco for many centuries, and could be considered as aliens only by a vision obscured by theological prejudice. But apart from this, it was economically ridiculous. A man's beliefs could make no difference to the benefit which his industry might bring to the State. This intolerant attitude, moreover, in many cases prevented occupation from being given to Christian workmen by Jewish manufacturers (a state of affairs to which there were additional objections on theological grounds), and thus added to unemployment amongst the population of the city instead of decreasing it. Nevertheless, despite its manifest imbecility, this policy of exclusion was consistently put into execution. The range of occupations of the Jews of Venice was accordingly strictly limited.

There was thus no limit to the petty vexations to which they were subjected. Any attempt to engage in any unauthorized calling promptly elicited a protest from the guild concerned, and would soon be suppressed by the government. They would be excluded from a handicraft which they themselves had introduced, so soon as it was established on a proper footing. From 1554, they were prohibited

from engaging in the woolen industry in all of its branches. They were effectively excluded from agriculture by the regulations which forbade them to own real estate, or even to take it in mortgage, being thus unable to own houses outside the Ghetto, or villas in the country. They were constantly warned not to infringe upon the rights of the Tailors' and (especially in Padua) of the Carpenters' Guild, whether as craftsmen or as dealers. They were not allowed to frequent fairs and markets for the purposes of trade, or to peddle at the gates of the monasteries. All manner of retail commerce, outside the Ghetto, was closed to them. They could not be employed even in printing establishments. In 1637, and again in 1709, they were forbidden to practice law, or to act as advocates in the Courts of Justice. The few callings open to them are more easy to enumerate than the vast number which were closed.

The *raison d'être* of the community, the original pretext for its admission, and the primary condition of its toleration down to the last days of the Republic was, as has been seen, the maintenance in the Ghetto of the loan banks for the benefit of the poor, which gave occupation to a number of persons. Besides this, the only occupation officially open to the Jews as a whole was *strazzaria*, or dealing in secondhand clothes and other articles, in which there was no question of competition with native productive industry.

At that period, this occupation had not quite acquired its subsequent despised status. This was before the days of cheap ready-made clothing, and

the poor could dress themselves only in the discarded apparel of the well-to-do. The secondhand dealer thus played an important and indispensable function in economic life; while his buying and selling was, naturally, not confined to clothes. The Jews had some considerable difficulty in being admitted even to this occupation. At their first attempt to engage in it they were rebuffed, an order being issued in 1497 excluding them. Under the stress of war, a number of individuals were empowered to open shops for the purpose in 1515, in consideration of large payments. From now onwards, in spite of the protests of the guild of *strazzari*, the permission was renewed in each successive *condotta* of the German nation.

The Jewish old clothes man thus became a familiar figure in Venice. His purchases were brought back to the Ghetto, where their presence was soon betrayed to the olfactory sense of any visitor, and where in consequence it was usual to indulge in what was generally regarded as the unwholesome practice of leaving the windows open day and night. Meanwhile, the articles would be reconditioned at the expense of their eye-sight by the women-folk, who were famous as seamstresses (it was said that a rent repaired by them was invisible), and taken out to be sold again. The rags which were past further utilization were sorted out, those of cotton material being sold to paper-makers. Old mattresses were beaten out, cleaned, and reconditioned—an insalubrious process for which the Ghetto was noted. It is hardly to be wondered at if the Jews endeavored to evade the restrictions placed

A Venetian Jewish Peddler

upon them. Thus they would sell at very cheap rates new clothes with a tiny tear or stain deliberately introduced, so as to justify, in case of necessity, a plea that the goods were secondhand. But their dealings were not confined to wearing apparel. Nothing was too big and nothing too small for them to acquire. All of the splendors of many of the palaces on the Grand Canal—the paintings of Titian or Veronese, the sumptuous plate, the exquisite hangings, the costly trappings of the gondolas—succumbed at one time or another to the magnet of the Ghetto. A certain patrician, to refund himself after gambling losses, disposed, on a single occasion, of no less than 15,000 ducats' worth of household goods, which his wife had to redeem. As a result of the accumulations of secondhand commodities in their hands, the Jews were much in request to furnish the *palazzi* and apartments hired by foreign visitors during the period of their stay in Venice. Similarly, when the ambassador of the Duke of Modena had instructions to procure his master an unusually fine piece of tapestry, it was only in the Ghetto that he could find it. For reasons ostensibly religious, but principally politic—to prevent clandestine dealings—it was forbidden for any person to buy or sell before synagogue service in the morning, or after it in the evening.

The only more dignified occupation to which the Jews of Venice were admitted was maritime trade. In this they were, as a matter of fact, definitely privileged; for they were the only persons other than Venetian subjects who were allowed to engage in it.

When, at the close of the sixteenth century, the patricians became too conscious of their aristocracy and began to look down upon the commercial activity by which their ancestors had built up their fortunes, it was left to a very considerable extent in Jewish hands. In an endeavor to stimulate the failing commercial prosperity of the city, the government showered privileges upon them. Besides those who imported and exported on their own account, some acted as brokers, or *sensari*. It was through their activities that Venice still continued to be a great entrepôt for the distribution throughout Italy and northern Europe of the commodities brought from the Near East, and vice versa.

Originally, this activity formed the especial prerogative of the Levantine and Ponentine nations, who were, as a matter of fact, strictly forbidden to engage in the *strazzaria* which formed the solitary official mode of livelihood of most of their coreligionists. At a later period, however, the distinction seems to have been disregarded; and, in their later *ricondotte*, the Jews as a whole were expressly permitted to engage in wholesale commerce. It was in the Levantine trade that they were most prominent. According to a tradition current already in the seventeenth century, it was by a Jew that this had been introduced to Venice, in the first instance. In 1541, the Senate publicly acknowledged that "the most part of the merchandise which comes from upper and lower Roumania is conducted by, and lies in the hands of the traveling (Jewish) Levantine merchants." So valuable were their services con-

sidered that the Turkish merchants trading in Venice, together with natives of Corfu, were exempted down to the last days of the Republic from any share in the communal taxation. In October 1599, as a counter-attraction for the Levantine merchants, who were showing a predilection for Ancona, the Senate issued a new decree exempting them from all fresh dues for ten years to come. In consequence, Venetian commerce largely benefited, while the wealth and the numerical strength of the Jewish community rapidly increased.

The trade of the Venetian Jews was by no means carried on exclusively with the Mediterranean world. They were in constant correspondence with Cracow, Vienna, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Rouen, and London, as well as Smyrna, Salonica, Corfu, Constantinople, and Cairo. As early as the first half of the sixteenth century, merchants from Prague were familiar figures in the Ghetto, and took home glowing reports of the Lagoons. Venetian Jews were frequent visitors at the famous Leipsic fairs. In 1576, Samuel Moses Sinca was empowered to treat with the Austrian envoy about a ship—presumably his own—which had been seized. But the Levantine trade was the most important. The part taken in it by the Jews was preponderant. When at the beginning of the eighteenth century, on the conclusion of the Turkish War, trade with the possessions of the Grand Seigneur was resumed, the earliest enterprise was that conducted by Dr. Isaac Foa. In 1686, the first patent for commerce with East and West had been granted to Aaron Uziel, an outstanding member of the Portuguese community.

For a considerable time, he continued to be one of the most prominent merchants in Venice, keeping four ships at sea on his business. His trade, in cloth, oils, mirrors, and numerous other commodities, extended to Zante, Cephalonia, Corfu and Constantinople. So great was his turnover that within a period of twenty years he paid nearly half a million ducats into the public treasury in customs dues. Another Jewish shipowner of the first rank was Abraham Franco, who had a fleet of six merchantmen sailing in his name. This kept him so busily engaged that he was exempted from holding any communal office. Isaac Dellamano was engaged in trade with northern Africa, and successfully negotiated a commercial treaty with Algiers and Tunis on behalf of the Republic. Hayim Carob had relations with London, Amsterdam, and the Levant. The firm of Curiel imported salt from Tripoli, which it transmitted to Genoa and Holland. Other Jewish houses of the first rank were those of Levi and Minerbi. At the close of the eighteenth century, the Treves dei Bonfili family played a prominent rôle in the commercial world. It was they who financed the treaty with the Barbary States, spontaneously lending for the purpose a large sum of money without interest. But they were remembered above all for their enterprise in launching the first trading venture to the Western hemisphere under the Venetian flag, sending to America a ship laden with flour and other local products, which returned with a cargo of sugar and coffee. In the whole of the Venetian territories, the supply of grain was to a very large extent in

Jewish hands. The house of Vivante was in its day the largest firm of the sort and provisioned the whole State, importing vast quantities of rice from the Duchy of Mantua for the purpose. Its services were so great that on one occasion it received the unusual distinction of an honorable mention by the Senate. At the close of the eighteenth century, according to an expert English observer, the trade of Venice was overwhelmingly concentrated in the hands of the Jews, who comprised in their numbers, with one or two exceptions, the wealthiest of the mercantile class.

Without a delicate financial organization (facilitated of course by their international connections), these vast operations would have been impossible. It is hardly therefore surprising that the Jews of Venice enjoyed considerable reputation in such matters. In the middle of the seventeenth century, they farmed the tobacco revenue at Verona and elsewhere. When the famous Venetian bank, the *Banco Giro*, was founded in 1619, it owed a great deal in its organization to the financial genius of Abraham del Banco.

The wealth of some of the Jewish merchant princes, at the height of their prosperity in the seventeenth century, was immense. It was computed that, in the whole of the Venetian possessions taken together, they were worth no less than two million ducats in gold. Abraham Sadie, who died in 1673, left nearly a quarter of a million, his personal and household goods being worth about 20,000 ducats. Joseph Sachi, six years later, left his

son 160,000 ducats, and an equal amount to his grandson. In the same year, Abraham Calfon left the princely legacy of 8,000 ducats to the German Fraternity for the Dowering of Brides, as well as 3,000 more to other charities. To the State, the advantage which accrued from their activities was enormous. At this period, according to an acute contemporary observer, the Jews were worth an average of 250,000 ducats annually to the treasury in a normal year, while they gave direct employment to no less than 4,000 Christian hands.

Though wholesale trade, pawnbroking, and dealing in secondhand commodities, formed the only authorized economic activity of the Jews of Venice, they managed to find other outlets for their energies. Indeed, the Senate expressly recognized their right to introduce to the State any fresh industry, which did not compete with those already existing. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, a certain Solomon distinguished himself as an engineer. When, for sanitary purposes, a plan was put forward for the diversion of the river Brenta, the Senate ordered that he should be consulted, "for it is understood that he has a perfect mastery and skill in the matter of leveling the waters." Half a century later, the Senate authorized the association of a number of Jews with a Christian mechanic in developing a machine which he had invented, as in matters in which a public utility was in question no differences of race or creed ought to be taken into account. Great fame was enjoyed by a Venetian Jew of French descent, Meir Magino, who invented an

improved method of silk manufacture, about which he wrote a remarkable book. In 1587 he was empowered by Sixtus V, from whom he received a monopoly, to introduce the art into Rome. In the following year he received a patent for a vegetable oil discovered by him, which produced extraordinary results in polishing mirrors and cut glass.

In 1630, a certain Nahman Judah, a Levantine Jew, was formally permitted to manufacture cinnabar, sublimates, and similar chemical compounds, and even to live outside the Ghetto for convenience in carrying on this trade. However—in deference to protests—a proviso was made that the business should be conducted in the name of a Christian. Some years later, on Judah's death, a like privilege was granted to one Zarfatti for the manufacture of these materials, as well as aqua fortis, white lead, and other ingredients necessary in the preparation of painters' colors. When the latter died, the manufacture deserted Venice, these commodities having in future to be imported from abroad. However, in 1718 the privilege was revived in favor of another member of the same family, Benedetto Zarfatti, in spite of a recrudescence of the usual opposition. It would thus appear that Venetian painting in the *seicento* and *settecento* owed a good deal to Jewish technical skill and enterprise. The Jews were expressly permitted to trade as apothecaries—a profession in which they showed great proficiency. In 1613, a certain Daniel Guastalla of Padua was licensed to sell an oil which he had discovered, which was said to be a specific against

numerous maladies. In spite of all restrictions, there were shops in the Ghetto—not only of foodstuffs (for the benefit of the inhabitants) but also of second-hand goods, and of those few commodities in which the Jews were allowed to trade. These were famous especially for glassware. All shops had to be closed, not only on the Jewish holydays, but also upon the major solemnities of the Church.

Besides this, the Jews widely engaged in a commerce, necessarily clandestine in part, in precious stones. From the earliest days of the Jewish settlement in Venice we find them following this profession, the example being set by Jacob, the ne'er-do-well son of Anselmo del Banco. Contemporary with him was one Aaron, who got into the public eye when he sold a patrician's wife, who could not afford it, a diamond of the value of 5,000 ducats. To exclude Jews from this calling, every endeavor was made. At the beginning, in order to prevent them from competing with Christian workmen, they were not allowed to work as diamond polishers. So far did the prejudice against them go that they were forbidden even to frequent jewelers' shops, for fear that they should learn this craft; and severe penalties were imposed upon any person who taught them. The result was foregone. The Jews took their expert skill and knowledge elsewhere, with the result that the number of polishing machines in the city went down almost to a vanishing point. The only remedy which could be devised against this was a more complete exclusion, so that they were forbidden to engage even in trade in precious stones. This was,

however, difficult so long as they were compelled to deal in secondhand commodities and to lend money on pledge, no sort of article being more likely to pass into their hands. Hence, when a person required a particularly fine jewel, it was to the Ghetto that he would go. Foreign rulers, in search of jewelry in Venice were wiser in this respect and generally entrusted the commission outright to a Jew. Ultimately, as the result of a petition presented in 1644, one or two members of the community were formally permitted to engage in the trade.

Their widespread connections, their natural acumen, and their discretion put the Jews in a position to hear all the news. In the late seventeenth century, according to a contemporary poet, a Jewish apothecary in the Ghetto would be likely to have shares in more than one commercial enterprise overseas, and might be expected to know the size of the latest consignment of boots to the army in Candia, and the number of transports in the harbor or under sail. Under such conditions, they possessed unusual qualifications to act as secret agents. Few were the patricians who did not have some Jew to act for them in matters of confidence, protecting him in return from the worst rigor of unjust laws; and Jews had access to many palaces on the Grand Canal without troubling the porter.

A widespread calling of the Jewish people throughout their long Dark Ages—voluntary, but fully as characteristic as the less desirable occupations which were forced upon them—was the practice of medicine. As has been seen, there was a whole succession of

Jewish physicians in Venice from the fourteenth century onwards, throughout the period which led up to the official establishment of the community. At the time of the institution of the Ghetto in 1516, there were at least three of them—Lazzaro, Calo, and Moses—all men of considerable reputation and with large gentile connections. In spite of this, they were not exempted from the new regulations, the only concession made to them being that they were empowered to remain outside the Ghetto at night, for the purpose of visiting a sick man or attending a discussion, provided that they informed the custodians where they had been. However, (presumably so as to make them all the more conspicuous when they went abroad), the license which they had generally enjoyed of wearing a black hat was shortly after revoked; and they were even forbidden to go about in the physician's usual wide-sleeved gown with silken trimmings.

This reactionary spirit continued to prevail. We have seen the prominent part played in local life a little later by Elijah Halfon, and his eminent rival, Jacob Mantino, who for a few years from 1527 was medical attendant to many of the most aristocratic families in Venice as well as to half of the diplomatic corps. Notwithstanding this distinction, and the support of the French and English envoys, he had great difficulty in obtaining permission to wear the black *beretta*, and even so only for short, temporary, periods. The reason, as a matter of fact, was not wholly to be sought in Venetian intolerance. England and France were at this period in constant opposition

to Spain; and the color of the headdress of the Jewish physician was thus elevated for the moment into a minor international question! This disappointment, coupled with the bad feeling aroused as a result of his feud with Solomon Molcho, induced Mantino to transfer himself to Rome, where he became body physician to Popes Clement VII and Paul III, and received an official appointment to lecture in medicine at the *Sapienza*. In 1544, for some unknown reason, he returned to Venice, where he was again temporarily exempted from wearing the Jewish badge. On this occasion he remained for five years, till 1549, when he went in attendance upon the Venetian consul to Aleppo, where he died. During the course of this second visit, he came into contact with Juan Rodrigo de Castel Branco, better known as Amato Lusitano, the greatest physician of his day: a wandering Portuguese Marrano whose genius led him to be courted by the greatest personalities in Europe, but who was hunted from place to place for his suspected fidelity to the religion of his fathers, until he at last found a resting place among his coreligionists in Salonica. The persons mentioned were only a few of those who distinguished themselves as medical practitioners at Venice at this period. Towards the middle of the century, the official physician to the city of Venice was Joseph Tamari, plaintiff in a famous law-suit against his father-in-law, Samuel Venturozzo of Perugia, in which appeal was made in succession to half of the Rabbis of Italy. So far was public opinion benevolent in this one respect that in 1553 the Senate granted a

certain Jewish physician named Calonymus the necessary means to keep his son at his studies, "that he may become useful in the service of this most illustrious city."

In 1581, a turning point came in the history of Jewish medical practice in Italy. With the accession of the fanatical Paul IV to the papal throne in 1555, the principles of the counter Reformation began to be applied against the Jews, the reaction against whom had become extreme. All of the old edicts against them, long more honored in the breach than in the observance, were reënacted and, for the first time, consistently enforced. Among these was the prohibition for any Christian to avail himself of the services of a Jewish physician. In 1581, this provision was reënacted separately in a Bull of Gregory XIII which, three years later, was printed and distributed in every corner of the Catholic world. The regulation was generally enforced in Italy, where the golden age of Jewish medicine was henceforth a thing of the past.

Venice was no exception to the rule; but here, the Jewish physicians did not go under without a struggle. They found a doughty champion in David de' Pomi, one of the most noteworthy figures of his age. He had been born in 1525 at Spoleto, in Umbria. His family was one of the oldest in Italy, having been founded according to tradition by one of the four princely houses of Jerusalem carried off to Rome as captives by Titus. His father had been ruined in consequence of the Italian wars, and the son had to depend for his living upon the practice of medi-

cine. Into this, he had been initiated by his uncles, being graduated subsequently from the University of Perugia. He attended in succession upon Count Niccolo Orsini and the Sforza family. Subsequently, as the result of a brilliant Latin oration delivered before Pius IV and his attendant Cardinals, he was empowered to practice at Chiusi amongst Christians as well as Jews. The Pope died, however, five days later, and his successor, the fanatical Pius V, annulled the grant. In consequence, David de' Pomi went to live at Venice. Here he attained a very considerable reputation, both as a physician and as a writer. He published a translation of Ecclesiastes dedicated to the Cardinal Grimani, with an appendix on Human Misery and its Avoidance dedicated to Margaret of Savoy. At the time of the plague of 1572, he composed a treatise explaining how to liberate any city from the pest. Another medical work, on the subject of gynecology, was dedicated to the Doge and Senate. He complied a trilingual Hebrew-Latin-Italian dictionary, which he dedicated to his patron, Pope Sixtus V himself. Besides this, he dabbled in politics. After the battle of Lepanto, he presented the Doge with a memorial, showing that the victory had been predicted in the Bible. He wrote a treatise to prove the divine character of the Venetian Republic, which unfortunately has not been preserved. Now, at this serious juncture, he took up arms in a last appeal on behalf of his people and of his profession. In 1588, there appeared his Apology for the Jewish Physician (*De Medico Hebraeo Enarratio Apologetica*), preceded by a commendatory

letter from Aldo Manuzio the younger, one of the leaders of intellectual life in Venice at this period. In this work, written in elegant Latin, the veteran scholar proved from the classical Jewish literature, supported by the example of history, the utter falsehood of the charges sometimes leveled against the Jewish people as a whole, and against Jewish medical practitioners in particular; and he concluded by adducing a number of examples of Jewish physicians who had greatly distinguished themselves by their skill and their devotion. This noble work, notable in the history of Jewish apologetics, was not without its result; for as late as 1593 David de' Pomi was officially empowered to continue to practice amongst Christians. Shortly after this date he died.[20]

Despite this strenuous defence, the activities of the Jewish physicians tended to become more and more confined to the Ghetto. From time to time, as the secular government became lax, the ecclesiastical authorities reminded them of their duty by republishing the Bull of Gregory XIII—as was done, for example, in 1592 and in 1667. In the middle of the seventeenth century, the Jewish physicians of Venice presented a petition to be allowed to practice among the general population as in former days. They quoted a number of recent examples to prove the devotion of their coreligionists, and enclosed, as a decisive proof, a copy of the Apology written fifty

[20] According to a pointless forgery published in the nineteenth century, David de' Pomi ultimately migrated to England, settling down in Hull!

or sixty years before. It does not appear that this endeavor met with any result. Nevertheless, to eyes not blinded by theological prejudice, it should have been needless; for there continued to flourish in Venice and her dependencies Jewish physicians of considerable reputation and ability, the restriction of whose activity to their own coreligionists was a loss to the State as a whole. It is possible to make up for the period of which we are dealing a list of some scores of names, many of them of real distinction. Jacob Uziel carried on the tradition of the literary physician set by David de' Pomi, being the author of a Spanish epic upon the life of King David, dedicated to the Duke of Urbino. Subsequently, he transferred himself to Zante, where he died. Other physicians of eminence who had studied in the Peninsula were Elijah Montalto, *alias* Felipe Rodrigues, physician to the court of France; Isaac Cardoso, the apologist, and his brother Abraham, the mystic; Abraham Vecinho, the astronomer; Joseph Abrabanel, son of Don Isaac, and many others. Of all of these, mention is made elsewhere in a different connection. In the plague of 1630, a certain Dr. Valensin extended his activities from the Ghetto itself to the neighboring districts which had been deserted by gentile practitioners. Subsequently he acted as physician to the German merchants on the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, as well as to the hospital of S. Bartolommeo. During the course of the war in the Peloponnese, various members of the patriotic Cretan family of Maurogonato served as army surgeons with great distinction. A contemporary

figure, Elkanah Circoletto (1601–1671), for some time attended all of the nobility of the island, besides acting as physician to the Hospital during the war without accepting any fee. At one period, his services were even loaned to the Pasha in command of the Turkish forces! The encomia with which his skill and self-sacrifice were rewarded were published after his death by his heirs and were so considerable as to fill a slender volume. In Padua, Verona, and elsewhere in the Venetian territories, conditions in this respect were identical.

Most famous amongst the Venetian physicians in the course of the seventeenth century were members of the Conegliano family, who originated from a small place of that name then under the rule of the *Serenissima*. Solomon Conegliano (1642–1719) settled in Venice after being graduated, like so many more of his family, at Padua, and rapidly gained a name as one of the foremost physicians and scholars of his day. At his house, he established informal preparatory courses to lead up to and supplement the ordinary university education; and these were attended by young Jews, avid for knowledge, from every corner of Europe. He was, however, outdone by his younger brother, Israel Conegliano, who went on graduation to practice at Constantinople. Here he gained the favor of the Sultan and of the Grand Vizier, a fact which called the attention of the Venetian envoy to his ability. In 1682, on his return from a visit home (where he had gone to consult with the local specialists about the illness of the Sultan's son-in-law), he was appointed physician

extraordinary to the Venetian embassy, at a salary which had never previously been approached. He served his government with the utmost loyalty. When the ambassador was recalled to Venice, he was left in charge of the business of the embassy. At the risk of his life, he sent secret information home through his brother. He unearthed a plot to burn the Venetian fleet, just in time to prevent its execution. When a conference met at Carlovitz in 1698 to arrange peace, he was attached to the Venetian delegation; and it was his efforts which ultimately brought about success. It is no wonder that privileges were showered upon him by the Venetian government. He was allowed to travel about at will without obtaining a special license—a right possessed by no other Jew; and he and his brothers were exempted by the Senate as a special grace from the obligation of wearing the Jewish hat. In 1700, he returned to Constantinople, where he died.

Toward the middle of the eighteenth century, the canonical regulations against the employment of Jewish physicians began to be neglected even in governmental circles, to the great disgust of clerical opinion. The Doge himself set the example in employing as his personal attendant Mario Morpurgo, one of the prodigies of his era. At the age of only seventeen, he was graduated in medicine at Padua, as many others of his family had been before him. Subsequently, he set up in practice at Gorizia, then under Austrian rule. He was driven out in 1756 by local religious prejudice, and transferred himself

to Venice, where he became personal physician to the Doge Marco Foscarini, who used to call him, by reason of his remarkable attainments, his walking library. His career was cut short in 1760 by his premature death, at the age of only thirty. It is a fitting name with which to close the noble list of Jewish physicians at Venice.

In spite of unfavorable circumstances, life in the Venetian Ghetto was astoundingly modern in tone. It is surprising to see how abuses and conditions of the nineteenth century were anticipated. Pietists complained that Hebrew culture was neglected in favor of Italian. Ignorance of the sacred tongue was so far spread that there was a movement for prayers in the vernacular. The spirit of reform was rife. Works were written attacking Jewish tradition, evoking a whole literature in Hebrew, Italian, and Spanish in its defense. Ceremonial laws were not infrequently neglected. Ingenious arguments were put forward in favor of going in a gondola, and even riding on horseback, upon the Sabbath day. Mystical tendencies, and the miraculous stories attached to them, were openly scoffed at. There was a strong current of opposition to the Talmud and to Talmudical literature. The nineteenth century was anticipated in the disputes concerning the introduction of instrumental music into the synagogues. We even find the phenomenon of the card-playing Rabbi, more concerned in justifying Judaism to the Christian than in teaching it to the Jew. Between ancient Alexandria and modern New York, it is doubtful

whether at any other time such an atmosphere prevailed.

The tie by which the Jews were bound to Venice was a very close one, and they felt something more than a mere local patriotism to the glorious traditions of the Republic. "The institutions of Venice are divine", wrote David de' Pomi, with a little pardonable hyperbole. "God Himself has promised by the mouth of His prophet to preserve the Holy Republic." More than one seventeenth century observer tells how the Jews considered Venice a veritable land of promise. Simone Luzzatto had no words capable of expressing his admiration for his native city, which he considered the heir to the Imperial destinies of Rome. Don Isaac Abrabanel was outspoken in his admiration of her constitution, which he adduces as a proof of the wisdom of Samuel in warning his people against setting up a king. The same tendency manifested itself in practice from the earliest days. The devotion of the Jews of Venice and her colonies was notorious, and was proved on a dozen different occasions. At the time of the war with Turkey in the sixteenth century, two Jewish bankers, Abraham and Anselmo, offered 1,000 ducats each to a public subscription on behalf of the Republic, their names being inscribed in a parchment register in perpetual remembrance. Even in its patriotic manifestations, Venetian Jewry was fully imbued with the methods of its environment. In 1477, one Salomoncino gallantly offered the 'Council of Ten,' in the traditional Renaissance spirit, to procure the poisoning of the Sultan of Turkey by his medical attendant, in

return for certain substantial favors. The offer was accepted by an overwhelming majority, although the enterprise seems to have ended in failure.

The Venetian people, according to Luzzatto, was "more pleasing and kindly with the Jews than any other in the world"; while (notwithstanding the prejudices of some patricians and religious zealots) the common folk were "friendly and sociable, liking them greatly." Under these circumstances, notwithstanding the efforts of the government, relations of the Ghetto with the outside world were constant and intimate. Jews and Christians worked together, played together and quarreled together. Priests and patricians were often present at the sermons given in the synagogue by Rabbis of especial eloquence, who did not hesitate to return the compliment. Hardly a stranger left Venice without visiting the Ghetto, and many of them have left vivid descriptions of what they saw. Foreign scholars came to sit at the feet of some of the more famous Rabbis, and continued correspondence after their departure. Ambassadors of every power in Europe—from England that excluded the Jews to Spain that burned them—did not scruple to follow their example. When the duc d'Orléans, brother of the king of France, came to Venice in 1629, he made a point of going to see the Ghetto, with the other notabilia of the town, accompanied by a brilliant train; and he was greeted by an eloquent address in the Spanish synagogue. Not that the interest shown was purely theoretic and intellectual. The Council of Ten was hard put to it to keep Christians away from

the theatrical representations on the occasion of the carnival feast of Purim, and ultimately seems to have given up the attempt. On the Rejoicing of the Law, strangers flocked to see the decorations in the synagogues. Musical societies in the Ghetto and outside it exchanged courtesies. Christian friends would sometimes attend Jewish funerals. Benedetto Marcello visited the Ghetto for musical inspiration for his famous settings to the Psalms, based in large measure upon the traditional Jewish melodies.

Outside, matters were much the same. In the churches, Jews were familiar figures—all the more freely, perhaps, since so many of the Venetian foundations are dedicated to Old Testament prophets. Rabbis would attend the sermons, to criticize and to learn; and they would sometimes be rewarded by hearing themselves spoken of with the utmost admiration. In the seventeenth century, there was one priest who made a point of referring to the Jews in terms of such warm regard that he was suspected of being one himself. Less reputable members of the community resorted to the churches for refuge, in order to secure freedom from arrest; and the authorities were forced to respect the subterfuge, until, in 1620, it was decided that in such cases the fugitive must show himself willing to submit to baptism. To the indignation of the ecclesiastical authorities, Jews and Jewesses were familiar figures in the parlors of the monasteries and convents. They flocked to the Regatta on the Grand Canal, and were anxious to secure the best places. Members of the two creeds dabbled together in alchemy.

They sat down side by side at the card table without qualms, other than at losing. They rode together on journeys (when the Jew was absolved, for safety's sake, from wearing his distinctive red hat) without any hesitation, excepting on the grounds of faulty horsemanship. At Verona, at the close of the eighteenth century, the regular sequence of sermons was suspended at Carnival time, so as to permit the faithful to go about their pleasure, in mask and domino, without compunction, or else to save the preacher from the indignity of addressing deserted benches. According to contemporary testimony, the desire to mix freely in gentile society was so prevalent, that men neglected the restrictions on forbidden food, shaved their beards, and went about bareheaded like their fellow citizens. During the long centuries of the history of the Jews in Venice, no solitary instance of a popular attack upon them is on record.

The artistic feeling which was the universal rule in Italy of the Renaissance could not be excluded by the portals of the Ghetto. Beauty of form, as well as of spirit, was pursued as avidly, if not so exclusively, as amongst any other section of the population. The synagogues were designed by the foremost architects of the day. Inside them, the wood-carving was executed by master-craftsmen, that in the Levantine synagogue, especially, figuring among the finest productions of the period to be found in Venice. The brocades hung before the ark and the mantles for the scrolls of the Law were of the finest. The most skillful silversmiths of the city were

employed to make the delicately chased trappings for the Scrolls and the lamps which swung from the roof. No pains and no expense were spared to make public worship an aesthetic as well as a spiritual joy.

In domestic ceremonial, a similar spirit prevailed. The factories of Pesaro provided elegant majolica platters for the Passover. The Sabbath lamp which was kindled in every home on Friday evening was often of precious metal. The craft of the illuminator was kept alive in the Ghetto long after it had begun to decay in the outside world. The *Haggadah* liturgy for the eve of Passover was written and illustrated by hand long centuries after the invention of printing; and its tradition was continued in woodcuts for those who could not afford greater luxury. The Scroll of Esther similarly was illuminated; and the artistic abilities of the Ghetto were lavished upon representations of the ten sons of Haman strung up on their gallows, or of the rejoicings for Purim in the contemporary style, in illustration of the enthralling story. Pilgrims, returned from Palestine, would depict in colors, as well as describe, all that they had seen. Occasional poems, on graduation or betrothal or marriage, would be engrossed and ornamented in a similar style. Above all, the *Ketubah*, or Marriage Contract, would be illuminated in gold and colors in honor of the new house which was to be established in Israel; and some of the examples extant reflect, in the delicacy of their work and in the warmth of their coloring, the artistic tradition of the *Seicento* at its best.

Not that art as exercised in Venice by Jews was necessarily religious. Moses da Castelazzo, who flourished at the beginning of the sixteenth century, was a portrait painter of some reputation; though he afterwards turned his attention to a series of illustrations to the Pentateuch. His son, in conjunction with whom he received a copyright for this work, was an engraver. Joseph Levi, of Verona, worked in bronze, and had the pardonable though unusual vanity of signing his productions; and his name is sufficiently distinctive to make it possible at least that he was a Jew. The same might be said of his coadjutor, Angelo de' Rossi. A fellow townsman of theirs, Jacob da Carpi (1685–1748), who afterwards settled in Amsterdam, was distinguished as a painter of portraits and of historical scenes, as well as in the capacity of an art dealer. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the aristocrats of the Ghetto would sit to the best painters of the day for their portraits, in which, save perhaps for some turn of expression or cast of countenance, there was nothing to mark them as Jewish.

Italy was the home of modern dramatic art. In this, the Jews took a leading share. It was an Italian Jew, Leone de' Sommi Portaleone, who wrote the *Dialoghi sull' Arte Rappresentativa*—the first of all works dedicated to stagecraft. In Mantua, where he lived, the abilities of the Jewish community in this direction were so pronounced that it was compelled to form a sort of permanent dramatic company, which had to give periodical performances at Court, before the Duke and all of his grandees, whenever any

such spectacle was desired; and it is on record how on Fridays the performance had to start early, to obviate any breach of the Sabbath. Venetian Jewry was by no means behindhand in this respect. On the occasion of the Purim of 1531, they are reported to have produced in the Ghetto a 'splendid comedy'; though envious Christians had to be content with hearsay since, by order of the Council of Ten, no stranger was allowed to be present. Solomon Usque (or Duarte Gomez, as he had been called in Portugal), a Marrano refugee, and a poet of considerable repute, developed the primitive *Purim-spiel* in a drama entitled *Esther*. This had a great vogue in its day; so much so that public representations of it were given before a select company of nobility and gentry in 1559 and again in 1592. When a further performance was proposed in 1613, Rabbi Leone da Modena (whose uncle, Lazzaro Levi, had been associated in the original production) volunteered to adapt the play in accordance with the fresh dramatic conceptions which had arisen during the last half-century. His *rifaccimento*, inspired to some extent by the recent drama upon the same subject by Ansaldo Cebà, a Genoese priest, was published in 1612. This was by no means the only composition of the sort which saw the light in the Venetian Ghetto. Leone da Modena himself wrote an original pastoral drama, *Rachel and Jacob*, and edited a similar work, entitled *I Trionfi*, by his friend Angelo Alatino (Venice 1611). His example was followed by his pupil, Benedetto Luzzatto, author of *L'Amor Possente* (Venice 1631). About none of these works,

is there anything whatsoever Jewish other than the authorship. This fact alone is sufficient to prove the great interest in things dramatic in the Venetian Ghetto. So much was this the case that, at about the same period, a permanent theatrical company was apparently instituted there, men and women attending its performances promiscuously. The local pietists stood aghast at the innovation. But they were borne down by weight of numbers, and, if the truth be told, by weight of learning as well.[21]

Regarding music, conditions were very much the same. Some training in this was considered an integral part of the education of any Jewish child, boy or girl. Giovanni Maria de'Medici, the composer (an apostate from Judaism who, forced to flee from Florence in consequence of a murder, subsequently became a favorite of Pope Leo X, by whom he was created Count of Verocchio), had an official appointment as flute-player at the court of the Doge at the beginning of the sixteenth century. This example continued to be followed for a couple of hundred years to come. In the eighteenth century, the Jewish instrumentalists of Verona enjoyed considerable reputation, one of them named Jacob Basevi Cervetto, accompanied by his son Giacomo, receiving an appointment at the English Court. In 1607, an operetta was produced in the Ghetto of Venice, in which many of the leading lights of the community

[21] The tradition seems to have continued till the age of Emancipation. During the Venetian Revolution of 1841, the Jewish Dramatic Society made itself prominent by a performance which it gave to raise funds for the patriotic cause.

delighted to take part. At this period, there was a certain Jewess named Rachel, gifted with a voice of unusual beauty, who was a familiar figure in the salons of the nobility. On the expulsion of the Jews from Mantua in 1629—one of the most tragic episodes in the history of the Jews in Italy—many of the refugees came to Venice. Amongst them were several of the expert instrumentalists, who for a long time had been the delight of the court of the Gonzagas. Under their inspiration, there was formed in the Ghetto a musical society, rejoicing in the suggestive name, *When we remembered Zion*. Rabbi Leone da Modena, characteristically, threw himself heart and soul into the new enterprise, becoming its secretary as well as *maestro di cappella*. For a time, it prospered exceedingly, and made an attempt to introduce secular musical standards in the synagogal services. It was in familiar relations, too, with similar organizations outside the Ghetto. However, the devastation caused by the plague of 1630 wrought havoc in this as in every other form of local activity; and though the musical society continued to exist for at least nine or ten years more, it never fully recovered from the blow.

An allied art, in which the Italian Jews long enjoyed supremacy, was dancing. Indeed it was one of them, Guglielmo da Pesaro, a member of the courtly circle of Lorenzo the Magnificent at Florence, who wrote the first modern book upon the subject, the *Trattato dell' Arte del Ballo*. A Jewish occupation at this period, almost as characteristic as the professions of medicine or of pawnbroking, was that

of instructor in music and dancing. The intercourse with Christians thus engendered was sometimes considered to be a threat to both religions. As early as 1443, the authorities at Venice ordered that the schools of music, singing, and other accomplishments kept by the Jews should be closed forthwith, and that the latter should henceforth be prohibited from teaching these subjects in the city under pain of six months' imprisonment and a fine of 500 ducats. In the succeeding years, this provision was frequently reënacted. Nevertheless, the predilection continued. It was regarded as part of the duty of a Hebrew teacher, however learned, to be able to give instruction in these amenities. Jacob Levi, Leone da Modena's son-in-law, and himself father of a scholar of some note, was a dancing-master by profession. Of his brother-in-law, Modena could find no higher praise than that he was an expert in singing, music, and dancing. In 1697, however, when an attempt was made to reduce the luxury prevalent in Ghetto life, it was prohibited for a dancing-master to be engaged in a bridal house whether after a marriage or before; and from this time the profession must have come to a speedy end.

In view of the overidealized picture which one is generally given of Jewish life in the past, it comes as something of a relief to find that the Ghetto had its human side. It harbored sinners as well as saints—some of them picturesque enough to arrest one's attention. Its members were always generous, but, if the truth be told, some of them were not invariably honest. All this is not disgrace.

It shows that, in spite of everything, the Jews were men, endowed with human passions as well as with superhuman sufferance; and it enhances all the more the glory of their resistance to the great odds with which they were faced. Indeed, a serious study of the facts emphasizes the Jewish virtues more than any vague generalization could do. In a semi-official list of public executions at Venice during the nine centuries of the existence of the Republic, only four names out of a total of 783 are those of Jews. Domestic life was, indeed, pure; but the eternal triangle was not entirely absent from the human scheme. Jacob del Banco, the dissolute son of the founder of the Venetian community, was cut off with the sixteenth century equivalent of a shilling by his wealthy uncle Vita, of Padua, on the ground that he had consistently brought ill repute on the Jewish people at large, and their family in particular. The disproportionate success of the Jews in their amours was one of the pretexts for the maintenance of the Ghetto system in all of its rigor; the name of a certain physician, who aped Don Juan, being especially mentioned in this connection at the period of its foundation. For social reasons rather than moral, Jews were prohibited from entering into relations with Christian women—even the *cortisane* —under the severest penalties on both sides, comprising flogging, imprisonment, and fine. The Ghetto was not altogether free from the taint. At the close of the seventeenth century (1694), a foundling was discovered near the gateway; and the authorities were confronted with the nice question

of deciding whether it should be brought up as a Jew. In 1639, the leaders of the community felt impelled to take action against the growing immorality. Nevertheless, thirty years later, a wealthy Jew named Sacerdote came to Venice from Mantua for the express purpose of carrying on an intrigue with the famous comedienne, Lucinda. Fights for wenches, on one occasion at least with fatal results, were not unknown. In spite of all this, the morality of the Jew was higher by far than that of his neighbors. In the course of a close and protracted examination of original records from the fourteenth century to the eighteenth, the name of only one Jewish prostitute was discovered; and she was a convert to Christianity. Romance, of course, stalked abroad: witness a seventeenth century broadside, prompted no doubt by recent actual occurrences, which forbade under the direst penalties the marriage of children without their parents' consent. In minor matters, the Jews followed the example of their neighbors. They swore freely, some of them hardly letting a sentence escape from their lips without the accompaniment of an ejaculation like *Per Dio Santo*! or some similar phrase. Women in childbirth called, imitatively, upon the Madonna to help them. Casanova records the name of an English Jew, one Mendes, amongst his local boon companions. It was more than once necessary to issue a proclamation forbidding the Jew to carry arms.

Traditional business acumen combined with scientific enterprise and contemporary superstition in bringing about the penchant of Venetian Jews for

dabbling in alchemy. This art was practiced in Venice in 1590 by a certain Gentile named Mamugnano with conspicuous financial success, due, however, more to the credulity of his clients than to any technical attainments of his own. It was his example, perhaps, which gave rise to the popularity of the profession in subsequent years. Like other maladies, it seems to have run in families. It had lured Shemaiah da Modena, Leone's uncle, to his death some years before. Abraham Cammeo, a Roman physician who should have known better, was an enthusiastic dabbler in the pseudo-science, and in 1603 he persuaded Leone to join him in his experiments during a period of unemployment. These did not produce the slightest result; but the seed thus sown fell on fertile soil. In 1614, Leone's son Marco began to dabble in the art in conjunction with a priest named Giuseppe Grillo. The initial experiments were so promising that the two set up a laboratory in the *Ghetto Vecchio* in the following spring. The results were such as to make a profound impression upon Leone, never averse from easy profits, who himself sold ten ounces of pure silver, which were said to have been formed out of an admixture of one ounce of the precious metal with nine of lead. For a time, he looked forward confidently to an income of one thousand ducats yearly earned with a minimum of labor. However, the chemicals used were so noxious as to make nugatory any result, however promising. It was not long before a hemorrhage caused by arsenic fumes forced the experimentalist to retire from this pursuit, and a

short time after he died. Thus another hope of restoring the family fortunes ended in unexpected failure.

Other superstitions characteristic of the time flourished among Venetian Jews. In such matters, indeed, the general population held the Ghetto in great respect. There was generally to be found in it some amateur astrologer to cast a horoscope, who could count upon an abundant clientèle. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Marco Calo, a distinguished physician (who was, however, spitefully accused by one of his coreligionists of poisoning a sick man for monetary considerations—a charge from which he was acquitted triumphantly), foretold the war which was to be waged against Venice by the League of Cambrai. Similarly, in March, 1513, he respectfully urged the Doge not to feel alarmed at the eclipse of the sun, which augured no ill to the Republic. The Jewish calendar was sedulously studied in gentile circles by those who desired to make a fortune by forecasting the result of the lottery through cabalistic means. It was a Venetian Jew who taught Weechard Valvassor "how to make a Magical Glass which should represent any Person or Thing according as he should desire." The clumsy German, however, lost the secret through inattention.

The less spectacular, but more practical, sciences were cultivated with no less enthusiasm. It is said to have been a Jew from Ferrara who first introduced the handkerchief to modern society; and no doubt the innovation was followed at Venice at an early date. Marco Raphael, the convert from Judaism who

figured as the expert upon Hebrew lore at the time of the so-called divorce of Henry VIII of England, had some time previously been rewarded by the Senate for inventing a new invisible ink—a useful adjunct in the famous secret diplomacy of the *Serenissima.* It was at Venice that Mordecai Jaffe, one of the most eminent Polish Rabbis of his age, studied astronomy for ten years from 1561. The physician Abraham Vecinho, who published a Jewish calendar for forty years in Spanish in 1626, was reckoned one of the foremost astronomers of his age; and his example was followed by Dr. David Valensin, who published a similar work in Italian. Emmanuel Porto, *alias* Menahem Zion Rappaport, who was born at Trieste and lived in Padua, enjoyed a great reputation in scientific circles in his day, and published a number of works, in Hebrew, Latin, and Italian, on geography, astronomy, and mathematics.

There was one vice, especially prevalent at the close of the Renaissance period, which the Jews faithfully imitated. "I have seen in Italy," wrote Immanuel Aboab at the beginning of the seventeenth century, "many places where the gentlemen come together in intercourse of play (as they call it) for their diversion; and I have beheld some persons broken and reduced to poverty by the games of dice, cards, and tables . . . How many houses have we seen ruined, how many fortunes lost, through love of gambling?" Many persons, who were unable to restrain themselves from this ruinous practice by any exercise of will-power, made solemn vows of total abstinence, which they would register, for

greater efficacy, on the blank leaves of their Bibles. It was on record, however, that even this was in some cases an insufficient deterrent. The Rabbis fulminated from their pulpits, pointing out that, in Jewish law, to win money by gambling was equivalent to theft; but all in vain. The lay heads of the community stormed, but with no greater result. Only at moments of stress, as in time of plague or persecution, the vice would be checked, in the hope of placating the divine anger; but the reform seldom survived the actual crisis.

Especially was this the case in Venice, where the vice was markedly prevalent in gentile circles—this being the city with which Aboab was most familiar, and which he had no doubt most in mind. Here at the end of the sixteenth century, the abuse had reached its climax. Gambling had become one of the favorite dissipations, both inside the Ghetto and outside it. Jews and Christians played together without misgivings on either side. When reproved, the former replied in a strikingly modern spirit that they constantly had to visit their business acquaintances in their own homes or in gaming-houses, and that it would be churlish as well as unbusinesslike to refuse to take a hand. Leone da Modena, that reprobate, who should have set a better example, was a passionate devotee of gambling, though in his prodigious youth he had written a pamphlet against it. True, when he lost any considerable sum, he became momentarily contrite, but his fits of reform did not last long. In the midst of the plague of 1630, after a long period of self-restraint, he turned to

cards again, much to his own disgust, choosing to begin upon a public fast. Meanwhile, the lay heads of the community, in order to placate the divine anger in the present terrible flagellation, had renewed a measure prohibiting the playing of any game of chance for money or otherwise over a period of six years to come, under the pain of excommunication. The new regulation was passed by 71 votes to 29. This blow at his favorite pastime struck Modena to the quick; and he marshaled all of his very considerable intellectual powers to combat it. He pleaded that the voting was irregular, that the prescribed absolute majority had been wanting, and that the lay heads of the community had no right to enforce a decree by spiritual penalties without the assent of the Rabbis. In consequence, this measure, like so many others of the sort, became a dead letter; and Modena was able to gamble his way cheerfully to the grave.

There was another respect in which the private life of the individual was similarly interfered with. Sumptuary laws, in limitation of personal extravagance, were among the commonplaces of medieval and of Venetian legislation. Among the Jews, they were regarded as especially necessary—partly by reason of a certain natural tendency to ostentation, partly as an outward sign of repentance at times of stress, but above all in order to avoid arousing gentile cupidity. At Venice, there was a whole series of regulations of the sort, from the beginning of the seventeenth century downwards. They seem indeed to have been necessary. An English traveler of the

beginning of the period speaks admiringly of the Jewish women at Venice, "so gorgeous in their apparel, jewels, chains of gold, and rings adorned with precious stones, that some of our English countesses do scarce exceed them, having marvailous long trains like Princesses that are borne up by waiting women serving for the same purpose . . ." This was the sort of extravagance with which the community had to contend. Thus, by the sumptuary laws of 1696–1697, it was forbidden for any person to wear brocade or lace of gold, silver or silk, or lace ruffles whether at the neck or the wrists, or any other similar adornment, excepting at the customary reception on any occasion of domestic rejoicing. No person was permitted to wear more than two rings at a time, while other jewelry, real or false, was similarly limited. The amount which a man might spend on his periwig was limited to twelve ducats; while a woman might not exceed a maximum of four ducats for a fan, or five for a muff. Special provision was, however, made (as was inevitable in Venice, even for Jews!) for the occasion of masquerades, when persons went out disguised, and certain of these provisions might be neglected. Similar limitations were placed upon the expense which might be incurred and the number of guests who might be invited to any family celebration, such as a betrothal, a circumcision, or a wedding. On these occasions, a maximum of two ducats might be spent upon fresh flowers, whether for wearing in the headdress or for adorning the house—four times as much as at any other time. A total number of

twenty guests might be invited, exclusive of relatives who had expressly come from other cities. At the close of the eighteenth century, when these regulations had apparently fallen into desuetude, a fixed tax of two ducats was imposed upon banquets on the occasion of a circumcision, and of five on the occasion of a wedding. The amounts so raised were to be devoted to the relief of the poor. Thus, in a characteristic fashion, private extravagance was turned to the advantage of public charity.

CHAPTER VI

PERSONS AND PERSONALIA

At no period, perhaps, in the whole of recent Jewish history have so many outstanding personalities lived at the same time in one place as was the case at Venice in the seventeenth century; personalities of interest not merely through their learning, but also through the wide and varied fascination of their characters and of their careers, of which, through the unusual wealth of documentary evidence which survives, we are peculiarly well informed. They are best grouped about Leone da Modena who, more than any other person, represented Judaism to the outside world of his age, and represents his age to the modern mind.

Leone da Modena was born on April 23rd, 1571, between six and seven o'clock in the evening, in the *Ghetto Vecchio* at Venice, in a house belonging to a certain Jacob Luzzatto. His mother was Rachel (Diana), daughter of Johanan Levi, who had been driven out of the kingdom of Naples in the general expulsion of the Jews in 1540. His father, Isaac da Modena, belonged to a more illustrious house, which could trace its ancestry back for five centuries. It was descended from exiles from France who had sought refuge in Italy, first at Viterbo and then at Modena, where they greatly prospered, and from which they had derived their name. Leone's great-

grandfather, Isaac, had removed from Modena to Bologna, where he carried on his business. He was the father of Mordecai (Marco) da Modena, who shed yet further luster on the family. Marco was a rabbinical scholar of repute, and author of a number of minor works on subjects connected with Hebrew learning. His profession was, however, that of medicine. He studied at the university of his native town, and, like all other properly qualified local practitioners was created a Knight of the Golden Spur, during the visit of the Emperor Charles V, in 1529. He died in 1530, aged only fifty years. His children were noteworthy as himself. One was Shemaiah da Modena, who met a premature end as a result of dabbling in alchemy. Another was Abtalion (d. 1611), a phenomenal scholar who (according to his nephew) was quoted more often than mentioned by his contemporaries. He came especially into the public eye when he went on a mission to Pope Gregory XIII to plead for the removal of the ban upon Talmudic literature, and made a brilliant Latin speech, which lasted for over two hours, before the assembled Curia. Another son, Solomon, besides being a scholar and father of scholars, was noteworthy by reason of his wife, Fioretta, who was famous for her deep knowledge of Jewish lore and who went to Palestine to end her days in an atmosphere of piety and learning. Leone's own father, Isaac, was the eldest of the three brothers, and was forced by circumstances to enter business early in life. Like the rest of his family, he seems to have been both superstitious and quarrelsome—the disputes

between the three brothers about the division of their father's property lasted, indeed, for thirty-two years! In worldly matters, however, he prospered exceedingly. In 1569, he was forced to leave Bologna in consequence of the ruthless edict of expulsion pronounced by Pope Pius V, and settled in Ferrara.

Here, on the night of Friday, February 16th, 1570, there occurred a serious earthquake shock. Disregarding the sanctity of the Sabbath, the Jewish inhabitants poured pell-mell with their Christian neighbors into the surrounding country-side. For some days after, the tremors continued, causing general alarm; though, as it happened, no Jew was killed, and—it seemed a miracle—the structure of none of the many synagogues which existed at this time in the city suffered the slightest injury. Nevertheless, this event was one of very considerable importance in Jewish life. In the first place, it was his intercourse with a certain Christian scholar in whose neighborhood he happened to find himself in his rural refuge, which stimulated that great scholar, Azariah de' Rossi—himself a refugee from Bologna—to write his epoch making work, *The Light of the Eyes*, which laid the foundations of literary and historical criticism amongst the Jews. And in the second place, it was this which caused Isaac da Modena to take refuge with his household in Venice; so that his son Leone was born, by pure chance, in the city with which he was afterwards to be so intimately associated. Eight days later, he was initiated into the Abrahamic covenant by Menahem

Azariah da Fano, the most renowned cabalist of his day, who was subsequently his teacher.

After a stay of some eight months in Venice, the family returned to Ferrara; the baby being very nearly kidnaped on the journey by a Christian porter to whom he had been given to be carried. As soon as he was able to speak, he began to show an incredible precocity. At the age of two and a half years, he publicly chanted the lesson from the Prophets in the synagogue, this being the usual initiation into Jewish studies at that period. Incidentally, he picked up every childhood malady which was about, including small-pox and tapeworm; though none imperiled his life quite so much as a quack remedy which was applied at the suggestion of an old woman. This was the sort of fortune which dogged him throughout life—and even before birth, if we are to believe his own account. A typical instance was that which took place when his father removed to the little village of Cologna, and constructed in his house a ritual bath. The young Leone promptly fell into it while playing with one of his friends, and was very nearly drowned. At this period, Isaac da Modena became impoverished, as the result of a monetary dispute with the Cardinal d'Este. Nevertheless, he continued to give his son the best general education that lay in his power. In the house of his cousin, Marco, at Ferrara, Leone received a good grounding in Latin, Hebrew, and Italian; not to mention music, singing, dancing, and other similar frivolities. At Padua, Samuel Archevolti, author of a pioneer work on Hebrew prosody,

initiated him into the mysteries of Hebrew versification. This he put to good use in 1584, when his tutor, Moses Basola della Rocca, died at Cyprus. In his memory, his pupil composed an elegy which, read phonetically, made equal sense whether as Hebrew or as Italian. This tour-de-force was in after-years occasionally imitated, but never surpassed.

The death of his step-brother of the plague at Ancona, whither Leone had gone to visit him, put an end to all hopes of the reëstablishment of the family fortunes. The young student had to set about earning his bread by giving lessons—an occupation which he heartily detested—in a private family at Montagnana. In 1590, he became betrothed in Venice to his cousin, Esther, with whom he was deeply in love, and of whom he had dreamed as his future wife. His ill-luck continued to dog him. His promised bride died just before the time fixed for the marriage, and he was ultimately forced to accept in her stead her sister Rachel, with whom he never seems to have had much sympathy. After his father's death, which took place on December 6th, 1591, he experimented for a short time in a commercial career. The results were anything but encouraging; and after four months he gave up the attempt and removed to Venice. With this place his activities remained bound up, excepting for short intervals, until his death. No other city presented such attractions to him. He paid numerous visits elsewhere, sometimes with the intention of settling; but he always drifted back to the city of the lagoons,

and to the squalid Ghetto in which he had become so familiar a figure.

On his arrival in Venice, Leone da Modena earned his living by teaching. Before he had been there long, he was invited to preach. His sermon gave general satisfaction; and henceforth his reputation rapidly increased. For the rest of his life, he was the star orator of the Ghetto, speaking sometimes on three or four occasions each Sabbath. In the gentile world, his fame was equally great. Ordinary citizens, patricians, ambassadors, princes of the blood, and even monks and priests flocked to hear him. On one occasion, when he delivered the memorial address upon a distinguished scholar before a mixed audience, he made an appeal for the purpose of providing a dowry for the dead man's daughter. So effective was his eloquence that donations flowed in, and within a few minutes five hundred ducats had been collected. Some time afterwards, Leone was attending the sermon in the church of S. Geremia, as was his wont, when he was surprised to hear the incident related in detail, as an outstanding example of charity, by the preacher, who had been present at the time; and the Rabbi received the compliment of being pointed out before the whole congregation as the hero of the occasion. In 1625, Modena was appointed preacher to the Spanish synagogue, thus becoming the official orator of the Venetian community. Some time previous, he had been made *Hazzan*, or reader, to the Italian congregation, a position which he retained till his death. Shortly after his arrival in Venice, Calonymus Belgrado, a

wealthy patron of learning, set up a domestic academy, at which he regularly lectured on matters of scholarship. He was not indeed a professional Rabbi—such a thing was at the time unknown in Venice. But his opinion was regularly asked from all over Italy on matters of Talmudic law, in which he tended to take up a characteristically lenient attitude; and he formed one of the rabbinical commission of the community, of which he ultimately became the senior member.

In the midst of all of these preoccupations, Modena was forced to scrape together his income from any quarter. He could not afford to be too particular. He himself enumerates no less than twenty-six professions which he practiced, mostly without success, at one stage or another of his variegated career. His main receipts were derived from his official functions as preacher, teacher, and reader in the various Venetian synagogues. Besides this, he had a vast number of miscellaneous sources of income. At one period of his life, he was the fashionable Ghetto tutor both for children and adults. In this capacity, he had sometimes to give instruction not only in Hebrew and kindred matters, but also in secular subjects, including music and dancing. He introduced into the intricacies of the Hebrew tongue many distinguished Gentiles, comprising also a number of foreign visitors, to some of whom he taught Italian also. He had a steady income from the sale of his published works, some of which enjoyed quite a considerable success. From the dedications, skillfully placed, he could generally

count upon some slight gratification; though sometimes he had grounds to complain of niggardliness in this connection. Besides this, he had no scruples in composing addresses for wealthy literary aspirants. He was a professional letter-writer, to whom persons came when they had need of a flowery Hebrew epistle. He acted as printer and proof-reader—the latter an especially important function owing to the enforced employment of Gentiles as compositors. On the occasion of marriages and other domestic celebrations, he wrote laudatory poems, both in Italian and Hebrew, for which he could generally expect a trifle from the flattered hero. He compiled, when called upon, rhymed epitaphs in the jingling style so fashionable in that period, some hundreds of those in the cemetery on the Lido being from his pen. His services were required as a professional scribe for the drawing up of deeds, as well as for official translations from the Hebrew. He wrote comedies, and supervised their production. He was the secretary of a number of Ghetto institutions. He dabbled in business. Occasionally, he practiced with success as a marriage broker. He wrote out amulets in which he can hardly have believed (although he wrote a work on the subject), and even taught the art to others. On occasion, he stooped to downright mendicancy. In a non-professional capacity, he was considerably interested in the musical academy of the Ghetto, of which he was the leading spirit.

At intervals, he left Venice in the hope of improving his prospects—going now to Cento, now to Ferrara, now to Ancona, now to Florence; but he

always gravitated back to Venice, without anything tangible having resulted from his enterprise other than the breaking up of his teaching connection, which it took some time to reëstablish. What undermined his fortunes more than anything else was his unfortunate addiction to gambling—one of the most prevalent of all Venetian vices of the time, which, as we have seen, had invaded and conquered the Ghetto as well. It was a weakness against which he of all persons should have been forewarned, seeing that at the tender age of thirteen he had written a pamphlet in condemnation of it. However, owing to his youth, the work had been published anonymously, so that the author did not feel overmuch bound by it. The sums which he lost were out of all proportion to the slender income which he so painfully scraped together. Generally (on the principle that the better the day, the better the deed), he chose some red-letter day for his outbursts. On the Hanukkah feast of 1594, he made a beginning by losing one hundred ducats. The lesson frightened him for the moment. Five years later, however, he began again, and in the course of six months had lost no less than three hundred ducats. Hard work and total abstention for eighteen months after this date reëstablished his position, but the following Hanukkah saw a further relapse. This continued at intervals during the whole of his life. Whenever he had managed to get together a few ducats, he speedily lost them at the card table. With advancing years, his infatuation increased rather than otherwise, and hardly a feast passed without a relapse.

During the plague of 1630, he sought for solace from present miseries in cards; choosing to begin on a fast day, when, in token of mourning, ordinary occupations were suspended. When the lay heads of the community, in the hope of allaying the divine anger, passed a resolution at this juncture forbidding all gambling, he put himself at the head of the opposition, maintaining, with more acumen than good taste, that the measure had been illegally exacted. It was this unfortunate addiction which, on more than one occasion, lost him his pupils, and which led Joseph Pardo, the Ghetto Maecenas, and father of a line of Rabbis subsequently famous in England and America, to withdraw from him an important piece of literary work. He generally bore his losses with equanimity, fortified by the pious consideration (as he whimsically wrote to a distinguished foreign Rabbi) that no prohibition to play cards was included amongst the two hundred and forty-eight negative precepts of the Bible. Not that he was always unfortunate. In one month, he won as much as five hundred ducats; but (as he pathetically records), "they went the way that they had come, and others with them."

In consequence of his gambling propensities, he was always hovering on the verge of penury. More than once, in order to cover his most pressing immediate expenses, he had to accept, from the congregation which employed him, a considerable loan on the security of his future salary. When his daughter married, he had to scrape together her dowry by begging from all of his acquaintances. In 1603, hav-

ing failed to improve his prospects by a mysterious visit to Ancona, he turned his attention to alchemy, by means of which he was in high hopes of reëstablishing the decayed family fortunes. Disappointed in this, he went to Ferrara, where he settled for a considerable time, and seemed about to make good again. He was, however, unable to resist the attractions of Venice, the air of which, he fancied, agreed with him better than any other; and it was not long before he returned to his previous miscellaneous employments in that city.

It is a curious phenomenon that Leone da Modena presents. He was a strange mixture of learning and simplicity, of enlightenment and superstition, of scientific intuition and the most crass credulity. He believed in dreams to such an extent that he was guided by one in his choice of a wife, and received his impressions of future life from a posthumous vision of his father. He cast scorn on the superstitions of his time, but did not scruple to turn an honest penny by selling charms and amulets, teaching their composition, and writing a hand-book on them. He dabbled in alchemy, which he considered to be a profound science, while writing an erudite pamphlet to combat the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. He alternately attacked and defended the cabala. He is reputed (though on slender grounds) to be the author of a skillful onslaught upon Jewish tradition, but was nevertheless responsible for the decision of the Venetian Rabbinate condemning the free-thinking views of Uriel Acosta. He believed implicitly in astrology, by which he thought that his

father's entire career had been foretold at the age of seventeen; and he had his horoscope cast by four experts—two Jews and two Christians—in perfect confidence that they would penetrate the secrets of the future. Despite his freedom of thought and of action, he remained a synagogal official to the day of his death, and composed many hymns which obtained general currency. His circle of friends was as varied as his interests. He was intimate with every person in the Ghetto who was interested either in scholarship or in card-playing. He was on terms of the utmost familiarity with many patricians, ambassadors, and clerics of high rank. But at the same time he was the bosom friend of a couple of low characters, who were subsequently convicted of receiving stolen property, and on whose account the Ghetto was closed on the Purim feast of 1636, for the purpose of making a perquisition. When his friends made an attempt to avoid the consequences of their crime by bribery, Modena's own name was somehow implicated; and he was very nearly involved in their disaster. This unseemly adventure did not, however, interrupt his regular sequence of sermons or deter the mixed audience which thronged to hear them.

This was the man who, more than any other person of his age, represented Judaism to the outside world. Christians, both priests and laymen, flocked to hear him preach. Hardly a visitor of any eminence —not excepting princes of the blood—came to Venice without going to the Ghetto to listen to this marvel of Jewish eloquence and learning. Many who

made his acquaintance in this way remained to study. Half a dozen eminent Christian men of letters were numbered amongst his devoted disciples. He dedicated the first edition of one of his works to an eminent ecclesiastic, and the second to a professor at the University of Padua. Thomas Coryat, the English traveler, met him by chance in the Ghetto, and entered into a religious disputation in Latin in which the visitor was easily and utterly worsted. He was in constant correspondence with the Bishop of Lodève in France, who sent him the proof-sheets of various works for perusal. He was in touch with several persons even in far-off England, including Sir William Boswell, the diplomat, and John Selden, the scholar, who mentions him with deference in more than one of his works. Probably no Jewish savant has ever represented Hebrew scholarship to the gentile world to anything like the same extent.

Leone da Modena's literary productions were considerable, but on the whole unimportant. His attainments were such that he might have made an imperishable name in Hebrew literature. He lacked, however, industry and application; and generally it needed the stimulus of sheer necessity to set him to work. When he wrote, it was with the feverish haste of a Goldsmith or a Sheridan, though generally on subjects different by far. When in 1602 he had gambled away all of his property and had been deserted by all of his pupils, he determined to publish a volume of sermons, based upon the notes from which he had preached. Instead of preparing the whole volume together, he dashed off sheet

after sheet, which he sent to the typography to be printed off as he finished them. In 1612 he published his dictionary, *Galut Jehudah*, which he dedicated to the patriarch of Aquilaea; but, to his great disappointment, he received only twenty ducats from his ghostly patron in recognition of this delicate compliment. "Though a righteous man," he records, dolefully, "he loved money exceedingly." From this work, he earned two hundred and fifty ducats, most of which (as he informs us) he dissipated away. For an edition of the Rabbinic Bible, for which his son Marco collected subscriptions from all over Italy, he received in all five hundred ducats. Even in his literary enterprises he was dogged by ill-fortune. A prayer book which he published for the use of the community of Rome brought him in only twenty-five ducats, owing to the dissatisfaction of the Wardens (to whom the work was dedicated) with the order in which their names appeared. Some of his most remarkable work has remained unpublished. A work on Jewish rites and ceremonies, which he wrote for King James of England at the request of Sir Henry Wotton, and through which his name is today principally remembered, never reached its intended destination. Ultimately it was printed without his knowledge, and brought him into some little trouble with the Inquisition. His pastoral comedy, *Rachel and Jacob*, he was forced to pledge with a friend at a moment of economic stress, and it was never printed; though his Italian adaptation of Usque's *Esther* attained some degree of success in both Jewish and gentile circles. In any list of his writings, mention deserves

to be made of his autobiography—the earliest, perhaps, in the Hebrew language—from which a large amount of our information as to his life and environment is derived.

In his old age, Leone da Modena's health began to fail. He became asthmatic, and suffered increasingly from insomnia. Despite the handbook of mnemonotechnics which he had compiled, his memory began to fail. His worldly affairs meanwhile prospered less and less. He was deserted by all of his family, with the exception of his dutiful grandson, Isaac Levi. His wife, with whom he had come to be on worse and worse terms, was racked with gout. Though, as he remarks, her limbs were crippled, her tongue was not; and their quarrels were so open as to become notorious to the whole of the Ghetto. Once more he was driven to seek solace in cards, loading himself again with debt. To make matters worse, he found it impossible to go up and down stairs as he had done in the past. In consequence, he was compelled to leave the apartment in which he had lived for seventeen years and to go about from one lodging to another, each darker and more malodorous than the last, and with no convenience other than the very dubious one of being on the ground floor. He had to pawn or sell his writings to get money to defray his most pressing needs. When he determined to set to work again, he was unable to find any person who would entrust him even with the elementary education of young children. The old man's correspondence became more and more querulous. In the end, he did not scruple to beg for monetary

assistance even from the Bishop of Lodève, who had honored him with his friendship.

His troubles were, however, approaching their end. On March 21st, 1648, Leone da Modena, "after an illness of four months, died, of fever and catarrh, in his seventy-eighth year, at his house in the *Ghetto Vecchio*." The Italian synagogue, with which he had been so long associated as reader and preacher, undertook to defray the expense of his funeral; though the opposition of a strong minority betrays the feelings of antagonism which his manner of life had aroused. Upon the next day, he was laid to rest under the cypresses in the ancient burial ground on the Lido, an epitaph for inscription upon his tombstone having been found among his papers. Even with his death, his troubles were not at an end. Some years before, he had composed the funeral oration which was to be delivered over his coffin by one of his sons-in-law. By a cruel fatality, he had survived the person designated to recite it!

Leone da Modena was the center of a galaxy of talent which flourished in the Venetian Ghetto of his day. An outstanding contemporary of his was Simha, or Simone, Luzzatto: a member of a great Italian family, originating at Lausitz in Germany, which at one time maintained its own *scuola*, or synagogue, in Venice, where it had by this time been established for centuries. Less versatile perhaps than his better known contemporary, he was nevertheless endowed with a profounder intellect, and displays at times in his general outlook a spirit incredibly modern.

Born in Venice in 1583, he received his Jewish education from the greatest Italian Rabbis of his age; while his published works prove him to have had, as was customary in those days, an excellent secular and classical training as well. Already in 1604, when he was barely twenty years of age, he had made himself a reputation as a rabbinicial authority, his opinions being cited with respect; and he first appeared in print two years later, in a long formal responsum upon the vexed question of the disputed ritual bath at Rovigo, which engaged the attention of all of the greatest intellects of the age. In this, he is already referred to, despite his youth, as Rabbi at Venice. In this capacity, he continued to figure down to the end of his life, his signature being appended, with those of Leone da Modena and others, to the approbations of many works published at Venice at this time. Apparently he was, unlike his distinguished contemporary, in a good economic position, and was able to live on his business income, without drawing any profit from his spiritual functions.

After Leone da Modena's death, Luzzatto figured, by virtue of seniority, at the head of the Venetian Rabbinate. Excepting for these bare details, we know very little about his life, excepting in connection with a dispute which he had with Modena's disgruntled grandson, Isaac Levi. As to his attainments, however, there is no question. Joseph Delmedigo praises his intimate acquaintance with mathematics. In the writings of his apostate pupil, Giulio Morosini, he stands forth as a frank, out-

spoken man of unusual liberality of mind and freedom of speech. As a Talmudist, he was quoted with respect by many of the greatest authorities of the day.

His independent published works were, however, all in Italian. In 1639, he produced his *Discorso circa il Stato degli Ebrei,* a political treatise written in a spirit which reminds one irresistibly of nineteenth century apologetic literature. The toleration of the Jews, particularly in Venice, is defended, in the interests of commerce, of revenue, and of other considerations. The author emphasizes the fact that anti-Jewish feeling was to be found only in the upper and the clerical classes, being entirely absent in the populace, to whom the presence of the Jews brought many advantages. He shows a rare impartiality, not refraining from drawing attention to the less pleasant characteristics of his people. But above all, he displays an intimate acquaintance with the general political conditions of his time, coupled with a rare prescience of the principles of political economy. So much notice did the work attract at the time that it was referred to with deference in several contemporary writings on the one side or the other; and three years later a priest in Rome thought it worth while to publish a specific answer to it.

His other publication, *Socrate* (Venice, 1651), dedicated to the Doge and the Senate, was entirely non-sectarian in character, and illustrates strikingly the degree of general culture with which the Venetian Ghetto was then imbued. Its intention is to prove

that human reason is impotent, unless assisted by Revelation. This thesis is put into the mouth of Socrates himself, who expounds it in the form of a fable. Reason, imprisoned by Authority, appealed to the Academy of Delphi for liberation. Pythagoras and Aristotle led the case against her, arguing that, were she freed, she would inevitably disseminate error. The appeal was accordingly on the point of being dismissed, when Socrates himself intervened with a suggestion that Reason and Revelation should be combined, the one becoming a check upon the other. The proposal was accepted; and, upon this understanding, Reason was again set at liberty. There is nothing specifically Jewish in this work beyond the name of the author. Nevertheless, it may be said that, in its impassioned championing of the freedom of the human intellect, it is essentially Hebraic in conception.

Luzzatto was also the author of a further work in the vernacular, a treatise upon Jewish beliefs and practices, in which he vindicated the authority of tradition. This, however, was never published, and the manuscript was lost. The same fate has befallen another minor writing of his, in which, in the full spirit of the Reform Rabbis of the nineteenth century (and, indeed, in anticipation of one of their actual innovations), he argued that, in view of the peculiar conditions at Venice, it was permissible to go about in a gondola on the Sabbath day.[22] This freedom of spirit was discernible in all of his utter-

[22] In this, however, he was anticipated four centuries earlier by Rabbi Isaiah da Trani—(*Shibbale ha-Leket,* ed. Buber, p. 83).

ances. He disbelieved—a rare phenomenon at that time—in the miraculous preservation of the Lost Ten Tribes. Of the cabala and mysticism generally, he spoke with the utmost contempt. He was quite willing to admit that the prophecies of Daniel referred to historical events, and not to Messianic times. Contemporary Christian observers, unable to comprehend such freedom of opinion (unthinkable, indeed, outside Judaism), asserted that he admitted the possibility of a reference to Jesus in certain Biblical passages; and the cardinal Barberigo used to recount how on his deathbed the freethinking Rabbi was only prevented from embracing Christianity by a forcible exercise of authority on the part of his scandalized coreligionists. In such circumstances, it is difficult to understand how any information with regard to his intention could have penetrated to the outside world; and it can only be imagined that, in this report, the wish fathered the thought.

Ranged against Leone da Modena and Simone Luzzatto was the ultra-orthodox party. Curiously enough, this was composed of persons of Spanish extraction—not, as might have been expected, of German or Polish fanatics. At its head was Samuel Aboab, the story of whose life was in itself a romance. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, there had emigrated from the dangerous atmosphere of Portugal a certain Marrano named Andreas Faleiro, a native of Valverde (Lisbon), son of Manuel Texeira and Francisca de Solis. First he had settled at Antwerp, where he acquired the reputation of a solid merchant. Hence he transferred himself to

Hamburg, where he declared himself a Jew and reverted to the more Hebraic appellation of Jacob Aboab. He was one of the three persons who were responsible for the purchase of the earliest burial ground at Altona in 1611, and thus may be reckoned amongst the founders of the Hamburg community. He had married a certain Beatrice Gomez, a Marrano like himself. Their son, Antonio Faleiro, *alias* Abraham Aboab, was a foundation member of the Bank of Hamburg, and maintained one of the three local synagogues in his house. He was the father of Samuel Aboab, who had been born at Hamburg in 1610 and was sent to Italy (whither his grandfather had already removed) at the age of thirteen, for the purpose of study. He became the pupil at Verona of David Franco, a famous scholar of Spanish extraction, whose portionless daughter Mazzaltob he gallantly married. His reputation as a scholar rapidly increased. First he acted as Rabbi at Verona, where his father and brothers came to join him, and where he founded an academy which enjoyed considerable reputation. Subsequently, he received a call to Venice.

Here, he became implicated in the Messianic agitation on behalf of Sabbatai Zevi, in whose claims he was at first inclined to believe; but ultimately he recognized his error, and took the foremost share in repulsing Nathan of Gaza, the prophet of the pseudo-Messiah, who had by now apostasized. It is unlikely that he received any payment for his services. He belonged to a wealthy family of merchants, famous for their benevolence; and there

was no need for him to be in the slightest degree dependent for his living upon his rabbinical functions. Few scholars of the time yielded to him, however, in reputation. His attainments were unusual. Besides knowing Hebrew and Italian, he was familiar with Spanish, Latin, and German. The grandson of a man who, as a Marrano, had known nothing whatsoever of traditional lore became famous as a rabbinical authority, inquiries being addressed to him from every quarter of Italy, as well as from places as far afield as London and Hamburg. His piety was extreme, verging upon asceticism. He fasted with an excessive regularity, eating no meat at all excepting on the Sabbath. He had the reputation of studying the law at night as well as in the daytime. Like all of his family, he was charitable in the extreme, supporting the more needy among his disciples at his own expense, and carrying relief in person to the houses of the poor.

His wealth, his social standing, and his family tradition of assimilation made no difference to his outlook. He represented, indeed, a reaction in the direction of extreme traditionalism—in every way the antithesis of Leone da Modena. Though under certain circumstances he reluctantly permitted the conduct of public worship in the vernacular, this was the only direction in which he displayed any similar liberality. He objected to teaching Hebraic studies to Gentiles; to wearing masks made in the semblance of the human face; to the publication of engravings in illustration of the Bible, and to the light-hearted parodies of serious literature which it was customary

to read on the feast of Purim. He even eyed askance the use of tobacco and of snuff, which occupied valuable time that might otherwise have been dedicated to study; and he strongly advised a certain proto-Zionist who was going to live in Palestine to discontinue the practice. It was to him that Leone da Modena's distinguished pupil, Azariah Picho, a famous preacher and Talmudist, indignantly appealed for support in condemning the theater which had recently been opened in the Ghetto, with the approval of that hoary reprobate. A greater contrast among contemporaries it would have been difficult to find.

Samuel Aboab's last days were clouded by some obscure persecution which led him, on the verge of his eightieth year, to leave Venice for a considerable period, and seek refuge on the mainland. Ultimately, he received from the Doge and the Senate permission to return, and so passed his few remaining years in peace. The circumstances of his death and of his funeral, of which we happen to be unusually well informed, give a graphic picture of the scenes in the Ghetto on the occasion of the passing of any of its greater sons. It was in the summer of 1694 that he took to his bed. No doubt, as at a similar crisis a couple of years before, prayers for his recovery were offered up in all of the synagogues, their sincerity being proved by liberal offerings to charity. However, they had no effect. When the aged sage, then in his eighty-fourth year, felt that the end was approaching, he gathered his sons around him and gave them advice by which to

govern themselves in after life. High ethical idealism and ritual minutiae were characteristically intermingled. He urged them never to pronounce the name of God in vain (swearing was then only too common in the Venetian Ghetto), to be scrupulously honest in all their dealings, never to slander any person or to make use of a contemptuous appellation, to care for the education of the young, and to attend synagogue daily with the utmost regularity. Then, after giving final instructions as to his burial, he gave up his soul (August 12th, 1694). His children and disciples who stood round the deathbed immediately rent their garments in token of mourning. From their sobbing, all the Ghetto soon knew that the sainted Rabbi was gone from their midst. The lamentation was general. All the shops were closed. The lay leaders of the community immediately went to the house of the dead man to pay him the last homage. When the body was prepared and laid in the coffin, his pupils took it on their shoulders and brought it out into the main street. There they were relieved by the seven members of the Venetian Rabbinate, who brought it to the doorway of the Portuguese synagogue, where the dead man had officiated. Hence the members of the Council, or *Mahamad*, took it up and laid it upon a black-draped catafalque which had been prepared in the sacred building. A memorial sermon was then delivered. The body was afterwards taken in turn to the Levantine and German synagogues, likewise draped in black, where the last respects were similarly paid. Then, the bier was placed upon a gondola, to be

conveyed to the ancient burial ground at the Lido. Here it was interred amid the deepest expressions of mourning. Subsequently, in response to the dead man's last wish, it was exhumed and taken for reinterment in the sacred soil of Palestine.

Samuel Aboab's family worthily supported his tradition. His son, Joseph, was sufficiently learned to act as Rabbi at Venice during his father's enforced absence from the city towards the close of his life. He subsequently emigrated to Palestine—a country which seems to have had an especial attraction for members of the family—settling in the 'Holy City' of Hebron. David, his brother, was the Maecenas of the family, and defrayed the cost of the publication of a volume of his father's responsa, under the title *Debar Shemuel*. This work was edited by his brother Jacob, who carried on Samuel Aboab's tradition to the full. He was well versed in Jewish and general culture, including Biblical antiquities and general science. He was familiar even with the Karaite liturgy and literature —a very rare phenomenon in those days. He conducted an active correspondence with various Christian scholars, including the learned Imperial Councillor, Job Ludolf, of Frankfort, and Theophilus Unger, an enthusiastic collector of Hebrew manuscripts, who sent him in return for his bibliographical information the latest news of the scientific world in Germany. The Aboab family is represented in Venice down to the present time.

The literary circle at Venice was by no means exclusively male. The fable of the inferiority of the

woman in Judaism is due to the fact of her supremacy in the less flamboyant, but incomparably more important, sanctuary which the home constitutes in Jewish life. In outside activities, her participation was not considered essential, but at the same time it was not by any means discouraged. Italian Jewry especially, at the period of the Renaissance, produced women—beginning with Doña Benvenida Abrabanel, niece and daughter-in-law to the great statesman, and mentor to the Grand Duchess of Tuscany—whose importance in communal life was inferior to that of none of the secular heroines of the period. In literary activities, conditions were similar. Rome produced in Deborah Ascarelli a poetess of genius, whose translations from the Hebrew betray scholarship as well as charm. She is rivaled in literary merit only by her Venetian contemporary, Sarah Coppio Sullam. Born in Venice in 1590, the daughter of Simon and Rebecca Coppio, she received the education usual in any well-to-do Italian Jewish family; and by the time of her father's death, when she was in her fifteenth year, she could read Latin, Greek, and Spanish as well as Hebrew and Italian, had more than a smattering of classical literature, and had already begun to draw attention by her poetical ability. To these attractions she added a considerable physical beauty, a charming personality, and a voice of rare sweetness. On her marriage in 1614 to Jacob Sullam, her attainments and her social graces made her a natural leader of Ghetto society; and her home became a literary salon, to which her musical ability and her gift of improvisa-

tion gave additional stimulus. It was frequented by Christians as well as by Jews. There, cultured Jewish merchants had the opportunity of making the acquaintance of the Venetian patricians whom their hostess numbered amongst her friends. Priests rubbed shoulders on the stairs with Rabbis. Distinguished strangers and literati, from as far afield as Rome or Paris, made a point of paying a visit to this charming Ghetto phenomenon. It was not long before she became known as one of the foremost Italian poetesses of her day. When in 1619 Leone da Modena issued his adaptation of Solomon Usque's drama, *Esther*, he could find no more fitting object for the dedication than Sarah Coppio Sullam.

At about the same time, a Genoese monk named Ansaldo Cebà had published an epic poem upon the same subject. Today, it appears turgid and unappetizing to a degree, but it accorded ideally with the taste of the time. The Venetian poetess was touched at the compliment paid to a Jewish heroine and wrote the author a letter of thanks and congratulation, informing him that she slept with his work under her pillow. He was immediately seized with the characteristic desire to win a soul for the Church, and replied, with an atrocious exhibition of bad taste, urging her to abandon the errors of Judaism. These were the first of a series of letters upon the subject. There were interchanged, besides letters, verses, books and gifts. The priest sent a basket of fruits from the Ligurian countryside. Sarah reciprocated by a gift of her portrait; but his servant, who had had the honor of waiting on her personally

during the course of a visit to Venice, reported that the beauty of the reality outdid anything which word or brush might depict. Intermingled with these compliments were more serious considerations. There was no difficulty in persuading the poetess to read the New Testament, with which, indeed, many persons in the Ghetto in conversation with Christian polemists, displayed a most disconcerting familiarity. She even began to study Plato, and perused with tolerance, if not conviction, the writings of S. Luis de Granada, the Spanish mystic. Naturally, all this had no result. For five years, from 1618 to 1622, the battle of letters continued, in a friendly fashion, but without the slightest effect on the clear-thinking Jewish mind. When Cebà died, it was as a disappointed man; and he could only commend his benighted friend to the prayers of his aristocratic Genoese patrons, in the hope that some miracle might at last achieve that in which he had failed.

This was not the only controversy of the sort in which Sarah Coppio Sullam indulged. In 1621, a certain priest named Baldassare Bonifaccio (later Bishop of Capo d'Istria), who had enjoyed her hospitality, accused her in a pamphlet of the unheard of crime of denying the immortality of the soul. She replied in a spirited *Manifesto*, dedicated, with subtle wit, to her father's memory, in which she ably defended herself against the allegation. The work is notable for its mordant humor as well as its inexorable logic; and one cannot help imagining that it betrays in certain passages the able hand of Leone da Modena. Thus, for example, she begs the

priest in one passage, with more vigor than delicacy, not to imagine that Biblical precedent was furnished for his action in the remarkable conduct of Balaam's Ass! This is the only one of the author's works to be published independently, though a number of her sonnets are scattered about in various sources; for, although Cebà's letters to her were printed in 1623, it was deemed prudent for obvious reasons to leave her replies in manuscript. When she died, on February 15th, 1641, at the early age of forty-nine, Modena mourned a friend as well as a patron; and the epitaph which was inscribed upon her tombstone was from his pen.

A worthy contemporary of Simone Luzzatto was Jacob Mendes da Silva: at one period, one of the greatest intellectual ornaments of the Venetian Ghetto, but whose identity as a Jew was subsequently entirely forgotten. In earlier life, as Roderigo Mendes da Silva, he had been amongst the most eminent writers in the Peninsula, being appointed Historiographer Royal to the court of Spain. Among his writings were a comparison of the two Cromwells (1657), a biography of Don Nuño Alvarez Pereyra, High Constable of Portugal (1640), and numerous similar genealogical works. He also wrote a book on the ancestors of the royal house of Portugal, which was published at Venice in an Italian translation, dedicated to the Marquis Agostino de Fonseca —a Venetian patrician of Portuguese birth, who was himself denounced to the Inquisition as a Judaizer, on grounds which appear by no means flimsy. Late in life, when he was already seventy years old, Mendes

da Silva retired to Italy to escape the persecutions of the Inquisition, leaving behind him a library valued at 20,000 ducats, together with all the rest of his property. Notwithstanding his advanced age, he became circumcised, assuming the name of Jacob; and to the amusement of some spiteful contemporaries, he was married to a girl of eighteen. Not unnaturally, the aged historian found some difficulty in accommodating himself in his old age to Jewish rites. It was remarked that he was seldom seen in synagogue, and never wore phylacteries. His freedom of opinion, moreover (common enough amongst Marranos and—as a matter of fact—in complete accordance with catholic Jewish tradition), gave rise to some talk. He was a confessed hedonist, and was reported to deny even the immortality of the soul. He held very modern views even as to the Bible, denying in particular the historicity of the Book of Esther. By force of habit, he continued to raise his hat at the mention of the name of Jesus and Mary, and kissed the robe of the polemical Minimite friar, Luigi Maria Benetelli, with whom he was on familiar terms. The latter was unable to comprehend the mentality of such a person. However, the fact that he continued, however little punctilious in his observances, to live as a red-hatted Jew in the oppressive atmosphere of the Ghetto rather than go out to occupy the place which belonged to him in the intellectual life of the outside world, shows unequivocally in what direction his sympathies inclined.

Somewhat anterior to Mendes da Silva in date

were a couple of other Venetian Marranos who left their mark in Jewish history and literature. Immanuel Aboab was the great-grandson of the last Gaon of Castile, whose descendants had been forced to embrace Christianity at the time of the forced conversion of 1497 in Portugal. He himself had seized an early opportunity of leaving the country, and had betaken himself to Italy, where he had studied intensively. Later he settled in Venice, where in 1603 he had given a discourse, concerning the loyalty of the Jewish people, before the Doge Marino Grimani and the Senate. It was here that he composed his *Nomologia*, a history and defense of Jewish tradition, directed against the sceptical tendencies which he found about him, which remains a main source for our knowledge of the history and background of this period. Ultimately, he retired to Palestine, where he died.

Contemporary with him was Elijah Montalto, born at Castello Branco in Portugal at the middle of the sixteenth century. Under the name of Felipe Rodrigues, he had studied medicine at Salamanca, and he had acquired a reputation as one of the foremost physicians of his day. He wrote several works which were at one time classics in medical study, attended upon the royal family in Paris, and taught in the University of Pisa. Ultimately, he settled at Venice, where he reverted openly to Judaism. He became not only punctilious in its observance, but also a doughty champion in its defense. He sent from Venice to hesitant Marranos in France a series of letters imploring them with the aid of trenchant

arguments to come back to the religion of their fathers. He entered into a triumphant disputation in Latin with a Dominican Friar, who had come specially from Padua to see him and was forced to admit his acumen. He composed a treatise on the famous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah which remains a classic of Jewish polemics. But, with all this, he had no element of credulity in his religious belief. Leone da Modena records how, when he went to visit Montalto in the company of other scholars on one occasion when he was lying sick, an itinerant Rabbi from the Holy Land began to recount some of the remarkable stories which were in circulation about the 'Ari', founder of the neo-mystical school in Safed. Suddenly, the irate physician bounded out of bed in his nightgown, protesting his utter disbelief. In 1612, he was called again to France by the Queen Mother, Marie de Médicis, who obtained from the Pope a dispensation for that purpose. He accepted only on condition that he would be absolutely undisturbed in the free exercise of his religion, particularly as regards the Sabbath; though he ingeniously proved that under such exceptional circumstances there would be no objection to his riding in case of necessity on that day. He took with him across the Alps a young Venetian Jew, Saul Levi Mortara, as his religious factotum. Only a few years later, he died suddenly at Tours, on February 19th, 1616, while in attendance on the royal court. By the command of the Queen Mother, his body was embalmed and escorted to Amsterdam for burial in Jewish ground. The latter was invited

to remain behind, ultimately becoming *Haham* of the community. Thus it came about that a scholar of Venetian birth became one of the most famous Dutch Rabbis, and was responsible some years later, first for the education and then for the excommunication of Benedict de Spinoza.

The individuals mentioned above by no means exhaust the list of interesting personalities who flourished in the Venetian Ghetto contemporaneously with Leone da Modena. The latter delivered the memorial address in 1597 over his friend and colleague, Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen, formerly of Padua, whose son, Saul Wahl, became famous as the legendary One Night King of Poland. In the Rabbinate, he was associated with Jacob Cohen, Abigdor Cividale, Benzion Zarfatti, Shemaiah di Medina of Salonica, Judah Saraval, and his uncle Judah Saltaro da Fano—all men of mark in their day. In early manhood, he must have come into close contact with David de' Pomi, famous as physician, apologist, and scholar. In his old age, he may have made the acquaintance of the young Israel Conegliano, who afterwards made a name for himself in diplomacy as well as in medicine. Perhaps in the whole of Italy at this period it would have been impossible to find in secular life any intellectual society of such breadth and of interests so varied, as the Venetian Ghetto could boast.

CHAPTER VII

HEBREW PRINTING AT VENICE

To the ordinary Jew of the Ghetto period, Venice was not merely the city of the Lagoons. It was the city of books.

Italy had been the nursery of the Hebrew printing-press; and its preëminence had been enhanced when the expulsion from Spain and Portugal had driven the local practitioners of the craft into exile. Venice, however, had not by any means led the way. Gershom, or Geronimo, Soncino, the Gutenberg of Hebrew printing and, in the secular sphere, the rival of Aldo himself, had indeed lived there for a little time, and brought away with him some of that artistic feeling and technical skill which make his works so much sought after today, despite the lapse of many centuries. But, for the moment, the hegemony of Hebrew printing lay on the *terra ferma*: in the little places, mainly, where the fear of interference was at a minimum. It was, as a matter of fact, in the unimportant township of Piove di Sacco near Padua, under Venetian rule, that the first Hebrew printing press was set up in 1475. However, the primacy could not long be withheld from Venice, where the abundant supply of excellent paper made printing easy, the comparative liberality of the governing circles fostered the growth of literature, and constant communication with Germany, the

cradle of the art, attracted the technical skill requisite for utilization of the other advantages.

Amongst the numerous immigrants from across the Alps there was a certain Daniel, son of Cornelius van Bomberghen, a wealthy burgher of Antwerp, who removed to Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century—a Gentile, despite his Biblical name. At Venice, he came into contact with an apostate Jew named Felice da Prato, who called his attention to the potentialities of the Hebrew press. The latter had already obtained from the Pope a privilege for publishing his books in the States of the Church and outside; and, as a sample of his proposals, he prepared in the short space of fifteen days a Latin version of the Book of Psalms, which was published in 1515 at the press of Herman Liechtenstein. This contains one of the earliest specimens of Hebrew printing that appeared in Venice. Daniel Bomberg was attracted by the idea, and set to work methodically to prepare the ground. He obtained from the Venetian Senate a privilege similar to that which Felice da Prato had procured from the Pope, and made all the necessary preparations to begin work. Jewish workmen were of course indispensable; and he even obtained permission for them to discard the statutory Jewish hat when they went about their business in the heart of the town, so as to prevent their molestation. In the following year, the first product of the press saw the light—the Pentateuch, with the lessons from the Prophets—which was published on November 30th, 1516: the earliest work in a noble tradition, which was to continue for three hundred years. This

was a memorable date in Jewish history. "In that year", jubilantly records Joseph Hacohen in his *Chronicles* as a noteworthy thing, "Daniel Bomberg of Antwerp began to print; and he brought forth from darkness to light many works in the holy tongue. Learned men were always going and coming in his house, as far as might be; and he turned not back his right arm from giving each one what he asked, according to the good hand of the Lord upon him. Now the said Daniel was a Christian born on his father's side and on his mother's, and in all of his ancestors; there was not in him one drop of Jewish blood."

For upwards of thirty years, Hebrew books continued to pour out from Bomberg's press in an almost incessant stream. It is difficult to say whether they are most noteworthy for the fineness of their paper, the beauty of their type, or the excellence of their matter. Time after time, this noble hearted Maecenas produced pioneer editions, which even today remain authoritative texts. His second enterprise was one of the most venturesome and most important of all. In 1517 and 1518, he produced in four stately volumes the first Rabbinical Bible, the *Mikraot Gedolot*. This comprised the original text, accompanied by the Aramaic translation and some of the more important commentators, with much additional matter in the appendices.[23] Not content with this first attempt, which in a few details was susceptible

[23] This was the first edition of the Hebrew Bible in which the division into chapters (taken over from the Vulgate) was indicated.

of criticism, he produced a further and more perfect edition in 1525, the text of which became the standard down to modern times. This work he republished in 1548. Above all, these Bibles were the first that had the complete Masorah—the traditional critical apparatus whereby the text of the Holy Writ has been kept free from blemish down to our own days. In the reissues, this was edited by Jacob ben Hayim of Tunis, a refugee from persecution in his native country, whose edition of the Masorah, with its scholarly introduction, is still classical. This work put the study of the Bible on an entirely fresh basis. New editions could be produced; but none excelled those of Daniel Bomberg either in beauty or in accuracy, and all copied, down to almost the least detail, the typographical tradition which he had set. It is not, perhaps, too much to say, that but for the *Mikraot Gedolot* of Daniel Bomberg, the scientific study of the Bible might have been delayed by centuries.

An even more ambitious enterprise which followed immediately upon this was the printing of the Talmud—that vast encyclopedia of Jewish lore in each of its multitudinous aspects, which obscurantists have maligned only because they have failed to understand. A few of the more reactionary Popes of previous centuries had indeed officially condemned the work; and there was still in progress in Germany the famous Battle of Books between Johann von Reuchlin, that noble hearted Christian scholar (with whom, by the way, Bomberg was in friendly epistolary intercourse) and Johann Pfefferkorn, a dubious

apostate whose spite excelled even his ignorance. Appeal in the conflict had been made to Rome. This was, however, the age of humanism; and Pope Leo X showed which way his sympathies lay by endorsing Bomberg's project of publishing a complete edition of the whole work, hitherto accessible only in scattered tractates. In 1519, the first section was produced. Henceforth, the work steadily progressed until, on June 3rd, 1523, the last treatise issued from the press. It was a stupendous undertaking, but one which was well worth the pains. Henceforth, it was possible for any Jewish householder to possess a complete edition of the work on which his civilization rested. Even today, after four hundred years, the Talmud as it is printed still follows the tradition which Bomberg set. The page presents approximately the same arrangement as that in his issue; and even the pagination, preserved unchanged for convenience of reference, goes back to this first complete edition.

For upwards of thirty years, Daniel Bomberg continued an almost unbroken activity. His copyright was renewed in 1518 for seven years. When it expired, in 1525, a considerable amount of opposition was encountered from the obscurantist party in the Senate, on the pretext that Hebrew books had been printed which were 'against the Faith.' On the first occasion indeed when the proposal to renew the license was brought up, it was defeated, notwithstanding the fact that it was backed up by an offer of one hundred ducats. Upon the next day, the sum suggested was increased by one half, but the result

was the same. Ultimately, Bomberg named the princely sum of five hundred ducats. Even the most unbending orthodoxy could not withstand an offer of such magnitude; and the printer's privilege and copyright were at last renewed for ten years. The amount of money which this Christian enthusiast spent on his passion was something enormous. According to one account, he produced all told Hebrew works to the value of some four million ducats. His first Talmud alone cost him approximately 100,000. The total number of works which he produced approached two hundred—most of them pioneer editions. Besides his great Rabbinic Bibles and his edition of the Talmud, he was responsible for the first or the standard edition of numerous other classical texts: the Jerusalem Talmud, the Midrashim, the compendium of Isaac Al-Fasi, and many more. His fame spread far beyond the bounds of the country which served as the basis of his operations. His export trade must have been very great. The Karaites of the Crimea, the exiguous remnants of the old Byzantine communities in the Turkish Empire, and the congregations of Syria, all sent to Daniel Bomberg in Venice to have their rituals published. Even when the art of printing in general had declined in Venice, so that special legislation had to be passed to check inferior publishing and the works produced there were excluded from Rome in the interests of scholarship, the productions of the Bomberg press knew no decline from the standards of perfection which they had originally set. There is barely another person in

the whole annals of Hebrew typography whose record can bear comparison with this.[24] Meanwhile Geronimo Soncino, driven into exile at Constantinople, where he still continued the family traditions, was complaining bitterly of the 'unfair' competition which had ruined his business.

Bomberg was fortunate in his collaborators and subordinates. Guillaume le Bé, the finest type-cutter of his day, whose Latin and Greek characters are still justly famous, produced six different Hebrew founts for him. In charge of his workshop from 1524 was Israel, son of Baruch Adelkind, an immigrant from Germany who had for a short time found his home in Padua, and who supervised the production of the majority of the books which were published at the Bomberg press. If we owe the printing of the Talmud to Bomberg's enthusiasm, it is due also in no small part to Adelkind's technical skill. Towards the end of his days, the latter succumbed to the prevailing influences of his environment and became converted to Christianity, assuming the name of Cornelio.[24a] Notwithstanding this action, Jewish scholarship owes him a debt which cannot easily be forgotten. Long after the Bomberg press had closed, Cornelio Adelkind and his son Daniel (named after his famous employer) continued to be actively engaged in Hebrew printing, now on their own account and now

[24] It is not without interest that, in addition to all his classical texts, Bomberg produced also one conversionist work—the *Shebile Tohu* of Gerard van Veltwijck.

[24a] Recent research, however, tends to discredit the story of Adelkind's apostasy.

in subordinate capacities, in Venice and the neighboring cities.

In his editors, Bomberg was no less fortunate. The earliest, as we have seen, was Felice da Prato, a person of far greater scholarship than the majority of apostates. His assistance was, however, short-lived, since he was called to Rome to take up missionary work among his former brethren in faith. It is not likely that his attainments would have been equal to the editing of the Talmud, which appeared after his departure. This was mainly entrusted to the learned Rabbi Hiyya Meir ben David, who, with the same indefatigable energy, superintended the other rabbinic works which left the press in succeeding years. The second Rabbinic Bible was edited by Jacob ben Hayim of Tunis, who later became converted to Christianity, but whose scholarship was beyond question. Abraham de Balmes, physician, grammarian, and philosopher (who owed his medical degree to the intervention of Pope Alexander VII, acted as medical attendant upon Cardinal Grimani, and is reported to have lectured on philosophy at the University of Padua), was another assistant of Bomberg, who published his *Mikneh Abraham*—a pioneering, bilingual, grammatical work—when no Jew would consider so arduous an enterprise. Elias Levita, who had instructed Cardinal Egidio of Viterbo in Hebrew and was in touch with all of the keenest intellects of the time, escaped to Venice in 1527 after losing his all in the terrible sack of Rome, and became a corrector in the Bomberg establishment. Here he

had the pleasure of seeing through the press a couple of his own works, including one written in fulfillment of a vow as a token of gratitude for his providential escape. Though, on the temporary cessation of Venetian printing in 1540, he crossed the Alps, at the age of seventy, to superintend the Hebrew press which Fagius had founded at Isny, he returned on the resumption of Bomberg's activities in 1544, remaining until they came to a definite close, in 1548. He himself died in the following year.

Towards the end of his days, Daniel Bomberg returned to his native Antwerp, leaving the direction of his press to his son David, who had been associated with him since 1527. He continued, however, to maintain a general surveillance over the establishment at Venice, the last years of which were among its most productive. Even after his death, in December 1553, when his press had been closed down for five years, its fame and its influence were not at an end. The greater part of the type passed to the printing establishments that succeeded it, which triumphantly boasted the fact in their productions. And, when Christopher Plantin, Bomberg's fellow citizen, desired to produce an edition of the Hebrew Bible, half a century later, he could find no finer type to use than that of Daniel Bomberg, the employment of which he proudly proclaimed on each title page.

In his old age, Daniel Bomberg had ceased to enjoy the monopoly of Hebrew printing in Venice. Towards the end of the first half of the sixteenth century, there was a sudden outburst of competition.

The ball was set rolling by the brothers Farri, who had already made themselves a considerable reputation as printers in Latin and Italian. Struck by Bomberg's success, they entered the lists as his rivals in 1544, publishing in the course of that year a series of ten Hebrew books. For the composition of these, they secured the services of Cornelio Adelkind, who did not, however, sever his connection with the Bomberg establishment. The enterprise, which cannot have been a great commercial success, ended almost as suddenly as it had begun. Simultaneously, Francesco Brucioli made a similar but even more abrupt excursion into the domain of Hebrew publishing, producing two solitary volumes. In 1547–1548, Meir Parenzo, one of Bomberg's principal collaborators, printed a few works on his own account; the only Jew, as it happens, who ever acted as an independent publisher in Venice, the city *par excellence* of the Hebrew book, until the period of its decadence![25]

In 1545, a more ambitious enterprise had been begun when Marco Antonio Giustiniani, a member of a famous patrician family, established a Hebrew press near the Rialto. He succeeded in securing for this venture nearly the whole staff of the Hebrew section of the Farri press; and types were cut for him not only by Guillaume le Bé, but also by the equally famous Michel Dubois. As his distinguishing printer's mark, he chose a conventional representa-

[25] The names of the two Adelkinds, however, father and son, appear independently on the title pages of a number of works in the period 1545–1552.

tion of the Temple at Jerusalem, accompanied by the verse: "Greater shall be the glory of this House, saith the Lord of Hosts." The boast was not, however, justified. Giustiniani rivaled Bomberg in neither the perfection, the importance, nor the range of his publications, though many of them attained a high degree of excellence. Noteworthy above all was the Babylonian Talmud of 1546–1551, which was, however, almost entirely based on the pioneer edition of a couple of decades before, though with a few important additions. In 1548, when Bomberg's press came to an end, Giustiniani enjoyed for a short period a monopoly of Hebrew printing in Venice, his house being one of three in the whole world then engaged in such activity.

The following year was marked by an incident in which the Giustiniani press played a leading rôle, and which was destined to reverberate throughout the Jewish world, threatening Hebrew literature as a whole with extinction. Rabbi Meir of Padua, a member of a distinguished rabbinical family which hailed from the city of Katzenellenbogen in Hesse Nassau, was amongst the most eminent Talmudic authorities of his day; and his opinion was consulted from every quarter of Europe in connection with knotty problems of Jewish law. He had lavished his vast knowledge in preparing an edition of the *Strong Hand*, the famous legal code of Moses Maimonides, which was now ready for publication. It appears that the conditions imposed by Giustiniani, who now enjoyed a monopoly of Hebrew printing in Venice, were too onerous. The author accordingly came to

an arrangement with another Venetian aristocrat named Alvise Bragadini. Under the latter's name a new press was founded, which published the work in 1550. Giustiniani promptly had another edition of the *Strong Hand* prepared, which he printed off and flung on the market, no doubt at a very low price, in the hope of ruining the rival enterprise. Rabbi Meir of Padua, realizing that he had little chance of redress in the Venetian courts, appealed to his kinsman, Moses Isserles, of Cracow, then the greatest rabbinical authority in Europe. To the latter, the problem was clear. It was a plain case of undercutting, utterly to be condemned on both scholastic and economic grounds. Accordingly, he issued a ban, prohibiting all Jews, under the pain of excommunication, from purchasing the edition published by Giustiniani.

The latter had a simple remedy. In equity, he had no case. But, if his rival's production was unimpeachable from the point of view of law, it might be vulnerable as literature. Accordingly, Giustiniani denounced Rabbi Meir's edition to Rome as containing matter offensive to the Holy Catholic faith. It was not difficult for him to find apostates who would support this view and discover passages which, by dint of a considerable dialectical effort, the suppression of the context, and the neglect of the historical setting, might be distorted into some sort of objectionable significance. Bragadini was not long in following suit, denouncing on similar grounds and through similar means the works which had been published by his competitor. Soon there were two rival sets of apostates at the papal court working on

behalf of the one party or the other and systematically maligning, partly through interest and partly through spite, all of the noblest products of the Jewish mind. Noteworthy amongst them were the two grandsons of Elias Levita, the famous humanist of the previous generation, who had both become converted and taken Holy Orders. At Rome, the tide of obscurantism was rapidly rising, as the Jews of the Papal States were destined to realize sharply within a few years; and the ground was fully prepared for this poisonous growth. From a private dispute between two printers, the affair developed into a general onslaught upon Hebrew literature as a whole. The case dragged on before the Curia. It made no difference that the original cause of the dispute, the press of Marcantonio Giustiniani, had been idle since 1552. By now, all parties were too deeply implicated to withdraw. On August 12th, 1553, Julius III issued his infamous decree stigmatizing the Talmud and the kindred literature as blasphemous, and condemning it to be burned. A couple of months later, upon the Jewish New Year's day (September 9th, 1553), an auto-da-fè was held on the Campo dei Fiori at Rome, at which Hebrew books in enormous number were committed to the flames.

It was not long before Venice followed suit; for Venetian orthodoxy was suspect, making implicit obedience in minor matters all the more necessary. Accordingly, she outdid even the obscurantism of Rome. On October 21st, 1553, the Council of Ten issued a decree ordering the delivery for destruction, to the *Esecutori contro la Bestemmia*, not merely

of the Talmud itself (as prescribed by the papal instructions), but also all "compendia, summaries, and other works dependent thereon." This was to be executed within a period of ten days; while disobedience was punishable by two years' forced service in the galleys, or five years' imprisonment, followed by perpetual banishment from the Venetian territories. It is easy to imagine the feelings of the Jews when proclamation to this effect was made, as prescribed, on the steps of S. Marco and at the Rialto. The order was so comprehensive as to embrace almost all Jewish books, which inevitably fell to some degree under its scope; and in any case the officials who saw to its execution, entirely ignorant of Hebrew as they were, could not discriminate. Even copies of the Bible itself were sometimes victimized. The persecution of Hebrew literature raged accordingly throughout the Venetian territories more than in any other part of Italy. Even in far off Crete, the example was ruthlessly imitated. The destruction was egged on by the apostate Eleazar ben Raphael, who insinuated that there was no writing in the Hebrew tongue which was entirely free from taint. The books in the possession of Christian scholars like Andreas Masius were not immune. The destroyers, according to the ancient chronicler, "stretched forth their hands even against the scrolls of the Law in the Holy Ark; but the leaders of the congregation arose and stood in the breach to save them out of their hand." The splendid edition of the Talmud, upon which Bomberg had expended so much treasure and pains, was everywhere confiscated and destroyed; this account-

ing for its phenomenal rarity at the present day. The sons of Rabbi David ibn Jahia, who were bringing some harmless works written by their saintly father to be printed at Venice, were surprised by the edict when they had arrived at Padua, and had the mortification of seeing the manuscript which they so highly prized committed to the flames. Rabbi Judah di Lerma had just published a work, *Lehem Yehudah*, dealing with the *Ethics of the Fathers*. The whole edition, consisting of fifteen hundred copies, was confiscated and destroyed; and, in his old age, the unhappy scholar had to set himself to writing it again from memory. The burning in Venice took place on the Piazza S. Marco, and was staged, by one of those exaggerations of callousness of which the civil powers were capable in their relations with the Jews, upon the Sabbath day. The loss affected the Jewish communities of the whole world no less closely than a massacre of their brethren would have done; for, whereas the one persecution struck at their bodies only, this was aimed at their very souls.

The Jews did not allow all this to happen without protest. Their eloquent pleadings were no doubt reinforced by monetary gifts; and on May 29th, 1554, the Pope issued a Bull modifying the severity of his first decree and directing that Hebrew books should thereafter be submitted to a censorship, upon passing which, their possession and study should be permissible. As far as Venice was concerned, Hebrew printing seems to have lain under a virtual interdict for a period of nine years. In 1563, however, it was resumed, though it never regained its former glory.

Henceforth, there was no question of republishing the Talmud, the greatest pride of the Bomberg and Giustiniani presses. Indeed, this work continued to be utterly proscribed, even the possession of a copy being prohibited under the severest penalties. To the great scholars of succeeding generations it remained to a large extent hidden treasure. They continued vociferous in their complaints that they could not study the work which formed the basis of Jewish learning, being forced to rely to an increasing extent upon their memory or on various compendia. Other works were no longer prohibited absolutely, but they were submitted to a rigorous censorship. More or less ignorant apostates were appointed to go through them and cancel any passages which they imagined to be slighting towards the Christian faith, signing declarations to this effect at the close. New books had to be licensed by the authorities, a formal declaration from whom was generally appended. The majority of the works which henceforth appeared from the Venetian presses bore on the title-pages the words, '*con licentia dei superiori*.' Ultimately, the Venetian government gave the *Riformatori* of the University of Padua the function of censors; and a declaration from them to the effect that it contained nothing "against the Holy Catholic Faith . . . Principles, and Right Manners", had to be appended to every book which was published. At the same time, copies had to be deposited in the public libraries at Venice and at Padua.

From 1571, there was a further restriction which inevitably reacted upon the excellence of the Venetian

presses. The Senate, true to its protectionist economic policy, forbade Jews to work in the printing industry, even when the production of Hebrew books was in question. Henceforth, the type had to be set up by Christians—many of them, indeed, converts from Judaism, but in no case men of great scholarship. The services of a good proof reader now became all the more necessary; but even the attention of some of the greatest scholars of the age was insufficient to make the works produced after this period as perfect as their precursors had been.

Under conditions so restrictive, it would not have been remarkable had Hebrew printing at Venice come to a premature end. The tradition, however, was too strong to succumb so easily. Giustiniani's press, as we have seen, had ceased its activity in 1552, after producing (exclusive of his edition of the Talmud) some eighty-five books. Bragadini's suspended its operations in 1554, the year after the condemnation of the Talmud, and in immediate consequence of that catastrophe. However, he retained his interest; and the resumption which took place after 1563, showed that little of the old enthusiasm was lost. Soon five independent Christian printers were in competition for the Hebrew book-trade. For some time, the Zanetti family retained the supremacy. Their Hebrew printing, however, came to an end in 1608. From 1565 to 1568, Giorgio Cavalli, whose printer's mark was an elephant surmounted by a turret, entered the race. Another well known mark was the gryphon of Giovanni Grypho, who published in 1567. But, besides that

of Bragadini, there was only one establishment which continued for any length of time. Giovanni di Gara, who ultimately acquired most of Bomberg's founts, was worthy almost of being reckoned his successor, and printed a notable series of works from 1565 down to 1609. Among his assistants were men like Asher Parenzo, Samuel Archevolti, Leone da Modena, and Isaac Gerson—all scholars of fame in their generation. The last named in particular is deserving of note as being the first Jewish savant to insist upon the inclusion of an index and a table of contents in every work with which he was connected; a good example which later generations have not, unfortunately, always thought it worth their while to emulate.

But the most famous Venetian establishment of this period remained the Bragadini press; and the Three Crowns which formed its distinguishing mark are familiar on the title pages of scores of works which were produced for many years to come. For some time it enjoyed a monopoly, which was broken only in 1631, when Giovanni Vendramin started in competition. These two establishments between them retained control of Hebrew printing in Venice until its final decline. This was inevitable. For the Jews were, by law, excluded from the printing trade and were forced to make use of one or the other of these gentile firms so long as their interest in publishing remained. On the death of Giovanni Vendramin in 1640, his establishment became known as the *Commissaria Vendramina* or *Stamperia Vendramina.* In the house of Bragadini one member succeeded another as titular head, taking little share

in any activity apart from drawing the profits. Finally, from 1667, this house became known similarly as the *Stamperia Bragadina*, and all question of personal interest was at an end. It was perfectly obvious that the two establishments existed merely as cloaks to enable the Jews who were excluded from the publishing trade to print what was desired. Their existence was humdrum and uneventful, saving for an incident which had taken place in 1634 when, in consequence of a quarrel in which the irrepressible Leone da Modena was engaged, a book of his, then in course of publication by the house of Bragadini, was denounced before the *Cattaveri*, and the press was closed down for six months. Ultimately, however, a decision was made in its favor, and it resumed its former uninspired existence.

From the middle of the seventeenth century, the deterioration of the products of the Venice presses became more and more marked. Nevertheless, the city remained one of the main centers of Hebrew book production, especially for Italy and the Mediterranean world; and several ambitious casuistic works, which required a great deal of care and of expense, continued to be published there. Short-lived establishments in the neighboring cities of Verona and Padua, at the close of the sixteenth century and in the first half of the seventeenth, failed to compete with those of the capital to any appreciable degree.

Censorship, however, at last did its work. The number, the appearance, and the contents of the works published in Venice progressively declined.

When Cardinal Richelieu was engaged in building up his famous collection in Paris, an agent sent to Venice had to report that there was no single Jewish library of any importance in the city, and that the only works published there were prayer books and other ritualia. In subsequent years, matters deteriorated still further. The types became increasingly worn and unlovely; the paper was poor; the works produced were generally trite or trivial in the extreme. Nevertheless, a few courageous Jews continued to use the ancient patrician names to cloak their literary activity. As the eighteenth century advanced, the most active were various members of the Foa family, which had behind it a noble typographical tradition dating back for some hundreds of years—Gad Foa, his son Isaac, and his grandson, a second Gad. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Vendramin press at last came to an end. The *Stamperia Bragadina*, however, anemically continued some nominal activity for another fifty years. At last, when the *Serenissima* was staggering to its fall, Gad Foa the younger ventured to put his own imprint upon one or two of his publications, without any pretext of using the name of the gentile firm as a cloak; and he continued to print a few works, none of any great importance, down to the Napoleonic era. It was now, however, too late to expect any revival of the glories of the Venetian press. The competition of Leghorn in Italy, of Amsterdam and a score of other places outside, was too strong. In 1810, obscure and unnoticed, the final Hebrew book

was published at Venice—the last in a noble series which stretched back for three hundred years, and which will never be forgotten so long as Jews take pleasure in learning and in books.

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMMUNITIES OF THE TERRA FERMA

As the Venetian power advanced upon the *terra ferma*, it came into contact with several Jewish congregations of ancient establishment, which had been allowed to develop by authority more tolerant, and wiser, than its own. More than one of them, indeed, could trace its origin back to Roman times. To recount in detail the history of all would be wearisome. The differences between one and another are minute, and of small importance. Generally, the story was simple and uneventful. At some date in the thirteenth or the fourteenth century, Jewish financiers would be summoned to open loan banks for the benefit of the population. During the fifteenth, or early sixteenth century, a *Monte di Pietà* would be opened, and the Jews would be banished forthwith. In the intervening period, there would be a monotonous record of *condotte* and *ricondotte*, diversified only from time to time by an occasional outburst of mob violence. All told, perhaps some scores of Jewish communities existed at one time or the other under the protection of the *Serenissima* in her possessions on the mainland. Marino Sanuto, indeed, when he went on his famous tour through the Venetian possessions, in 1483, found them at a number of little townships, where one would hardly

have credited their presence. Thus, at Villafranca, there was "a fortress with many houses within it, inhabited by Jews." The same was the case at many other minor places. It was indeed at one of them, Piove di Sacco, near Padua, that the first Hebrew printing press was set up in 1475. Already in the middle of the fifteenth century, the annual revenue which the Republic secured from its Jewish subjects on the mainland averaged one thousand ducats. Generally speaking, the central government maintained the condition of affairs which it found, in this as in most other respects. Thus, when Ravenna was acquired in 1441, it was expressly laid down that, in the interest of the city and of the district, the Jews should be permitted to remain and lend money at a stipulated rate of interest, which was slightly increased in the case of strangers. This policy was maintained by the Republic as long as it retained possession of the city. Ravenna, however, was conquered in 1509 by the Holy League. At the same period, Venice finally lost the overlordship of several other towns which contained important Jewish communities. Among these were Cremona and Riva di Trento, both of which had played an important rôle in the early history of Hebrew printing. The surrender of these places was confirmed by the Treaty of Noyon in 1516, and the respective Jewish settlements came to an end not long after.

Even had these territories remained under Venetian rule, however, it is by no means certain that the Jews would have been allowed to remain undisturbed. The second half of the fifteenth century was the

heyday of the establishment of the *Monti di Pietà*; and town after town found itself at last able to get rid of the Jews. Thus, in 1453, and again, on their return, in 1486 the Jews were driven out from Vincenza; in 1479 from Bergamo and Salo; in 1563 from Brescia; in 1509 (following upon an abortive attempt of a century before) from Treviso, whence a final expulsion took place in 1590, after a brief period of resettlement. At Bassano, where an important community had existed since the thirteenth century, and where the edicts of expulsion of 1468 and 1481 had been ineffective, exclusion was enforced after the war of 1509–1516. At Asolo, where the miniature court of Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus, offered especial opportunities, there was a little community, subsequently recruited by some of the refugees from Treviso. The existence of this was ended by a tragic event, unexampled in the history of the Jews under Venetian rule. One day in November, 1547, a band of bandits assailed the Jewish houses. Ten persons were killed outright, and eight more severely wounded. The authorities severely punished the culprits; but the surviving Jews fled the city, the community never thereafter being resuscitated. At Mestre, the parent community of Venice, Jews continued to live in their quarter, called *Piraghetto*, during the whole of the sixteenth century, an agreement being concluded with a couple of Jewish 'bankers' in 1573. However, business in so small a place cannot have been brisk, and it is not likely that the community continued its existence for long. In the peninsula of Istria, Jews succeeded the Florentines as official money lenders

at the close of the fourteenth century, and established little communities at Pirano, Parenzo, Capo d'Istria, and other centers. However, during the course of the seventeenth century, they were replaced by the inevitable *Monti di Pietà*, and the Jews were forced to migrate to Venice, Trieste, and elsewhere.

Thus, during the classical period of Venetian Jewish life, the number of communities on the *terra ferma* greatly diminished. The history of the majority of those remaining is not very enthralling. At Conegliano, where Jews had lived from the fifteenth century, they were relegated in 1637 to a Ghetto, which was transferred to its present site in 1675. To Ceneda, in 1597, a certain Israel da Conegliano was summoned by the Bishop to found a loan bank, and a congregation was formed, composed almost exclusively of the descendants of the founder.[26] Both of these diminutive communities continued to exist up to recent time, but have now completely decayed. In the neighborhood of Padua, there were minor communities at Monselice, Castelfranco, Montagnana, Este, Gonselve, and Citadella, where one or two families were established for the purpose of business; but they enjoyed no great importance. More isolated were those of Friuli—Gonars, Spilimbergo, and especially S. Daniele. All of these were destined to disappear, under dramatic circumstances,

[26] Noteworthy amongst them was Emmanuel, *alias* Lorenzo da Ponte, the baptized son of Jeremiah Conegliano, who rivaled Casanova in his amorous adventures and autobiographical audacity, wrote the librettos to the most famous of Mozart's operas, and closed an eventful life in New York, at a venerable old age, in 1838.

at the close of the eighteenth century. Real interest can however be claimed only for the three major communities of the *terra ferma*—Padua, Verona, and Rovigo—with which the relations of that of Venice were especially close. A certain degree of cohesion between them was brought about by the measure of 1591 which stipulated that Jews of the *terra ferma* should enjoy toleration for no greater period than those of the capital, and made them join in its financial responsibilities. Ultimately, one *condotta* served for the whole group, so that their fortunes became closely interdependent.

Verona

The oldest of these communities of which we have definite knowledge is that of Verona. Jews were perhaps established here in Roman times; and in the tenth century the congregation was numerous and important. They lived on terms of friendliness with their neighbors, with whom they exchanged visits, and they engaged in all branches of commerce without opposition. Such amicable relations found a strenuous opponent in Ratherius, Bishop of Verona between 931 and 968, one of the fathers of medieval anti-Semitism, who set himself to break down this tradition of friendly intercourse. Ultimately, as it appears, he succeeded in having his own way, and the Jews were expelled from the city. The exile, however, can have had but short duration. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Verona produced Jewish scholars like Eliezer ben Samuel, who was

respected as a rabbinical authority far beyond the boundaries of Italy. His grandson, Hillel of Verona (1220–1295), was a famous physician, and one of the most eminent philosophers of his day. A few individuals seem to have continued the tradition through the next century. In 1408, shortly after the acquisition of the city by Venice, there was a fresh immigration. Despite the strenuous opposition of a section of the citizens, Jewish bankers were invited thither in order to reduce the enormous interest charged by the Christian usurers. At this time, they lived scattered about in the parish of S. Sebastian, in the center of the city, having their synagogue in the Via dei Crocioni. In other respects, their treatment was much the same as elsewhere at this period. All professions other than money lending were forbidden to them, a formal edict to this effect being issued in 1443; and they were compelled to wear the Jewish badge. This took the form of a yellow circle on the breast, suspended by a ribbon from the neck; excepting over the period 1443–1480, when it was in the shape of a yellow star. The popular aversion became effective in 1499, on March 11th of which year the Jews were banished from the whole province, their place as bankers being taken by Christians. These, however, were so harsh and oppressed the poor so greatly, that before long the Jews were allowed to return.

The war of 1509 submerged Verona as well as other places in the Venetian territories on the mainland, and the panic-stricken refugees sought shelter in the capital. At the end of 1516, the Jews of Venice made

a loan of 10,000 ducats to the government for the purpose of recovering this city, and many must have returned to it on its recapture. The government loyally respected their rights; and when in 1526 the citizens of Verona presented a petition requesting that the Jews should be prohibited from lending money at interest, it was rejected by the Senate on the ground that the Republic was bound by a previous agreement. From this period, therefore, the definite establishment of the Jewish community may be said to date. Its nature and composition were to a large extent determined by the geographical position of the city—the first considerable place on the Italian side of the Brenner Pass. Accordingly, the Ashkenazic, or German, ritual was followed. Constant intercourse was maintained with the great communities north of the Alps, more particularly with Prague. Italianized names of German origin abounded — Pincherle, Basilea, Olandese, Alpron, Minzi, Moravia, Tedesco, and others. A further element was added at the close of the sixteenth century by the arrival of refugees from the neighboring Duchy of Milan, whence the Jews were expelled in 1596.

The range of occupation of the members of the Veronese community had by this time become considerably widened, money lending being no longer their main activity. Indeed, it is reported that on one occasion the authorities had to intervene to protect the Jews from the rapacity of Christian usurers. The Jews acted as brokers, a number of local merchants publicly testifying in 1641 to their honesty

and ability. Some were engaged in tailoring. As elsewhere in the Venetian territories, they were much interested in the textile industry, the manufacture of fustians and other coarse cloths lying largely in their hands.

The beginning of a new era in the history of the Jews in Verona was marked by the establishment of the Ghetto at the close of the sixteenth century. In 1599, the Bishop of the city succeeded in having all of the four hundred Jews who then composed the community segregated in a separate quarter in the center of the town, hitherto known as *sotto i tetti.* Gates were erected at each end, adorned by triumphant Latin inscriptions, to commemorate this outstanding triumph for the faith, and the whole Ghetto system as it was enforced at Venice and elsewhere was introduced. According to current ideas, this should have been regarded by the Jews as an occasion for general lamentation. But at this time, it was realized that there were two aspects to the Ghetto as an institution. If it kept the Jew in, it no less certainly kept the Gentile out, and provided a certain security against violence. But above all it rendered possible an intensive development of Jewish life, excluding all antagonistic influences, and rendering assimilation impossible. Leone da Modena wrote to the sister community in the name of the 'Holy Congregation' of Venice, congratulating it on what had happened. Contemporary chroniclers recorded the fact exultantly. At Verona, on the anniversary of the dedication of the new synagogue, which marked the end of the translocation, a special

annual celebration was instituted to commemorate the event. Each year, on the eve of the New Moon of Shebat, a special service was held in the synagogue, which was specially illuminated for the occasion. The ark was opened. The festive psalms were read. The scrolls of the Law were taken round the building, escorted by lighted torches, and to the accompaniment of jubilant chanting. A hymn was recited, specially composed for the occasion by Mordecai Bassani, member of one of the most illustrious Veronese families. Finally, the Rabbi delivered a sermon, pointing out the moral of the day. This unique celebration, which provides a curious and unexpected sidelight upon Jewish psychology in the age of persecution, continued to be observed until the period of the French Revolution.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, a number of persons of Spanish and Portuguese extraction, many of them Marranos, headed by Giovanni Navarra, obtained permission to settle in Verona for the purpose of trade, founding a minor Sephardic congregation which continued to exist to our own days. In order to accommodate these new arrivals, the Jewish quarter was enlarged by the addition of the *Ghetto Nuovo*. This included a little *piazza* known after them as the *Corte Spagnuola*, on the top story of one of the houses of which they erected their synagogue—a quaint, pillared edifice which was rebuilt in 1759. For some time, Verona became one of the major centers of Marrano immigration in Italy. Here there settled the Aboab family from Hamburg, and the two eminent Spanish physicians,

Ezekiel de Castro and Isaac Cardoso. By the close of the eighteenth century, the total population had risen to about nine hundred. There was a model communal organization. Grouped about the synagogues were at least fifteen voluntary fraternities, with objects as diverse as solving enigmas, visiting the sick, and the maintenance of a free school. On the whole, the history of the community was unimportant; though there were popular disturbances in 1745 which led to a week of prayer and penitence under the leadership of the Rabbi, Nathan Pincherle, and his son. At a later period the most eminent Rabbi was Menahem Navarra, who died suddenly under tragic circumstances in 1775, while he was conducting the Friday evening service in the synagogue.

Rovigo

The story of the community of Rovigo is even less eventful. In 1391, Jewish lenders were summoned there (as well as to the neighboring townships of Badia and Lendinara), with the authorization of the Marquis of Este, to open the inevitable loan banks. Apparently, the bankers were also engaged in tax farming. When, in 1484, the district of Polesine was acquired by Venice, conditions remained unchanged. For a long time, the bank at Rovigo was in the hands of the Consigli family, with whom the Republic renewed its agreement every five years. Around it were grouped a few other individuals. However, it retained the supremacy communally as well as economically, and the office of Warden of

certain of the congregational institutions was hereditary in it. It was a member of this family, Abtalion Consiglio, who exercised the functions of Rabbi at the close of the sixteenth century. His elder brother, Jekuthiel, had constructed in his house a ritual bath for the women-folk, which was filled in such a way that there was some doubt as to whether it could properly be used. Abtalion submitted the difficulty to the Rabbinate of Venice. The question was a delicate one. For some years, opinions and counter-opinions went backwards and forwards all over Italy. Several volumes of documents upon the problem were published; with the result that the name of Rovigo is still a byword wherever Hebrew books are collected and rabbinic studies are pursued in the old fashion.

When the woolen industry was introduced into the Polesine and the neighboring regions, the Jews took a notable part in its development. At Treviso, as far back as the fifteenth century, it was financed by their capital; while an attempt was made to oust them from it in Castelfranco in 1554. In the middle of the eighteenth century, there were no less than five Jewish firms engaged in it in Rovigo. Christian competitors endeavored to have them excluded from the industry; and the struggle continued for many years. But officially, the only occupation in which the Jews of Rovigo were permitted to engage was that of 'old clothes men'. The economic distress in the community was extreme. In the whole of the Ghetto there were no more than fourteen shops. By the side of the one or two wealthy manufacturers, there

were a large number of persons who lived from hand to mouth. Indeed, it was reckoned that an absolute majority of the Jews of Rovigo were in receipt of public relief in one form or another. This extreme economic rift divided the community into two sections, who carried their opposition even into the field of communal politics. The 'rich' asserted that, bearing as they did the whole burden of the community upon their own shoulders, they had a right to monopolize office. The 'poor', on the other hand, claimed, in a perfectly modern spirit, that each individual should be of equal importance, whatever his economic situation. These squabbles constitute a considerable part of the history of the Jews in Rovigo over a long sequence of years.

Padua

The most important of the communities of the *terra ferma* subject to Venetian rule was that of Padua. Here, the record of Jewish settlement goes back to the close of the thirteenth century. The city was always bound up in an especial degree with learning, both Jewish and secular; and it is characteristic, therefore, that the first Paduan Jew known to us by name should be a certain Master Jacob Bonacosa, who there translated into Latin in 1255 the famous medical classic of Averroes, the *Colliget.* His presence presupposes the existence of a community, though no other trace of one is found at this period. From the fourteenth century, however, conditions became more propitious. The house of Car-

rara, which then ruled the city, was broad-minded and tolerant, like the majority of the 'tyrants' of contemporary Italy. They made Padua the seat of a brilliant and extravagant court. Under their patronage, the famous University rapidly increased in importance; and the concourse of students who arrived from every corner of Europe to study there, added to the commercial possibilities of the city. A Jewish settlement was soon attracted. The newcomers were largely merchants or money changers, many being engaged also in the buying and selling of precious stones. Most, however, were occupied in *strazzaria*, or the trade in secondhand commodities. As money lenders, they did not at first figure to any appreciable extent; for the usurers of Padua, belonging sometimes to the noblest families, were notorious throughout Italy, and would suffer no competition. When public opinion and economic process forced them into the background, their place was taken by the 'Tuscans' (a generic name which included any Italian money lender). It was only at the close of the Middle Ages that the Jews began to gain prominence in the practice of this profession.

From the middle of the fourteenth century, little groups from the neighboring Jewish communities began to combine their surplus capital for the purpose of money changing, finance, and trading in Padua, where they would be represented by one of their number. This was a sort of primitive joint-stock company, rendered possible by the implicit confidence which the Jews had in one another. Besides their activities in the city itself, they extended their

operations to the surrounding territories. The first association of the sort of which we have any definite knowledge was formed in 1369 with a capital of 1500 ducats, by a number of Jews in Rimini and Ancona. Others followed at intervals in the following years. Thus when in 1405, after a characteristic display of Renaissance statecraft at its worst, the Republic of Venice dispossessed Francesco Carrara and occupied Padua, there was already a small Jewish community established there. Its position soon changed for the worse, as the aristocratic trading Republic was inevitably less sympathetic than the so-called tyranny which it had dispossessed. Henceforth, the Jews were treated in the same way as elsewhere in the Venetian possessions, tending to become restricted more and more to the profession of banking. Nevertheless, the community rapidly increased in importance. When in 1416 a congress of delegates of Italian Jewry was held at Bologna to consider what means should be adopted to check the threatening spread of anti-Jewish feeling, Padua was amongst the places represented; and two of its members—Abraham ben Judah, the physician, and Isaac ben Moses Finzi—were elected on the board, which was to watch Jewish interests for the following ten years. At the next synod, which was held at Forli in 1418, Moses ben Avigdor was present on behalf of the community; and Padua was appointed to be the seat of the watch committee henceforth. As the century advanced, the city became a great seat of Jewish learning. A Talmudical academy was established by Judah Minz, which soon acquired a world-wide fame, attracting

students not only from Italy but also from as far afield as Germany and the Levant. On his death, in 1509, the leadership was taken over by his son, Abraham Minz (d. 1541), and then in turn by the latter's son-in-law, Meir of Padua (Katzenellenbogen) (d. 1565), and the son of the last named, Samuel Judah (1521–1597), who subsequently became Rabbi at Venice. Thus the dynasty continued in one family for a full century.

The example which they set was avidly followed. Sixteen eminent Talmudists regularly attended the school of Judah Minz. A remarkable description is extant showing the unusual zeal for learning of the leaders of the community at the beginning of the sixteenth century—men of great substance, for the most part, whose names were familiar and respected in business circles far and near. The wealth of the community at this period was remarkable. Hirtz (Naphtali) Wertheim, whose house was sacked at the time of the disturbances of 1509, and who died as a result of his sufferings, constructed a private synagogue, of unusual richness and beauty, which he set about gilding from top to bottom. Appeal was made to the Doge, who ordered him to desist. However, no attempt was made to interfere with his expenditure in other respects, with the result that the appurtenances of this place of worship were of legendary beauty and magnificance. Especially renowned were a curtain for the ark and a mantle for the scroll of the Law, embroidered with his crest, and worth—it was said—five hundred ducats. His contemporary, Hayim (Vita), Meshullam, the brother of Anselmo

del Banco of Venice, knew how to make better use of his money. His charity was immense. Thrice each week he made a free distribution of food to the poor, accompanied in winter by wood for burning. When he died, on October 7th, 1531, it was found that he had left the enormous sum of 30,000 ducats. His will, by which he made munificent donations to every species of charitable object, aroused in its day a great deal of attention. Among his legacies was one to the Doge and the *Signoria*, in return for seeing that the other bequests were carried into execution.

In 1482, under the patronage of Bernardino da Feltre, a *Monte di Pietà* had been established in Padua. For the moment, this did not greatly affect the Jewish bankers, whose period of greatest prosperity came after this date. They were now, however, no longer indispensable; and in 1547, after one of the usual periodical disputes, they were forced to close down their business. This was not, however, the only occupation in which the Jews were engaged. From 1448, a Jewish guild of *strazzaiuoli* (secondhand dealers) had been in existence, the members of which were empowered to enjoy all of the privileges of the Christian organization in return for an annual payment. Besides this, they were engaged in trade, in spite of all efforts to exclude them or to restrict their operations. In 1615, they owned no less than eighty-four out of the eighty-six general stores in the city. They imported goods from abroad; and they dealt widely in gold, silver, and precious stones. By an agreement made with the guild of shoemakers in 1539, they were empowered to trade in leather.

Thanks to the support of the university authorities, intent on maintaining cheap prices, they were permitted to deal in textile goods. In manufacture, too, they took a very notable part. The silk industry had been introduced into Padua in the fifteenth century by a Jew named Moses Mantica. In 1645, one Trieste established looms, at which he gave employment to no less than 6,000 hands. In spite of all opposition, similar participation in many other branches of economic life continued.

The popular attitude with regard to the Jews grew worse as the sixteenth century advanced. Mention has already been made of their sufferings in 1509, at the time of the war. Their recovery was rapid. In 1541, an agitation was started for their segregation. This finally resulted, in 1602, in the formation of a Ghetto on the Venetian model in the center of the town, with four gates at the end of the principal streets. It was not long before the leaders of the community began to complain of the discomfort of their new quarters, where the rentals were disproportionately high, the streets narrow, and the houses damp and insanitary. This insanitary condition was responsible for the terrible devastation in the Ghetto on the occasion of the plagues of 1571 and 1631. In the former epidemic, 220 persons succumbed. In the latter, no less than 634 were infected out of a total population of 721 souls. Of these, 421, or nearly two-thirds of the total, died. One of the commissaries appointed by the community, Abraham Catalan, has left a vivid account of all that occurred, which deserves almost to rank by the side of Defoe's

Journal of the Plague Year as a masterpiece of gruesome description.

Another memorable scene in the history of the Jews in Padua took place in 1684. The allied armies were besieging Buda, the capital of Hungary, which was being defended by the Turks with the utmost tenacity. The eyes of Christian Europe were fixed upon the city; and every day that its fall was delayed, popular feeling ran more highly. Since there were at hand no Moslems against whom their passions could be vented, the Jews had to serve, as usual, as the scapegoats. There was indeed a small community in the besieged city, members of which did their duty against the attackers. It was alleged, however, that their numbers exceeded 30,000, that they were responsible for the protraction of the defence, and that they perpetrated unheard of atrocities against any Christians who were so unfortunate as to fall into their hands. The credulous populace received all of these reports unquestioningly. In Rome, feelings against the Jews ran so high that it was dangerous for them to venture into the streets without an escort. Under Venetian rule, in Monselice, Montagnana, Castelfranco, and Citadella, conditions were similar. But at Padua (where passions already ran high by reason of a recent favorable decision of the government in a dispute relative to the participation of Jews in the woolen industry), the state of popular feeling was worst of all.

A premature report of the fall of the beleaguered city fanned the smoldering passions into flame. On August 20th, 1684, a crowd of peasants and artisans battered down the gates of the Ghetto, forced a way

inside, and began to sack it systematically. A regiment of cuirassiers arrived and cleared the streets just in time to prevent bloodshed. Nevertheless, the mob continued to rage and, after the departure of the troops, began a second attack on the gate of S. Urbano, hastily fortified from within. In the Ghetto, despair reigned. The uproar of the mob, the sound of the sledge hammers beating upon the gate, and the glare of the fire which was being used to burn it down, all added to the terrors of the scene. For the first time within living memory, the regular sequence of service in the synagogues (which had continued even during the horrors of the plague) was interrupted. A few persons improvised ladders and escaped with their wives and children to adjoining Christian houses, where they were permitted to take refuge. Suddenly, with a crash, the gate gave way.

For a moment, those within could see the figures of the assailants silhouetted against the flames. Then the mob poured in, and the sack began again. Matters were at their worst, when the podestà resolved to call out the bombardiers—an unprecedented action in case of internal tumult—and came in person with the captain, attended by torch bearers, to endeavor to restore order. Simultaneously, proclamation was repeatedly made to the sound of drums, threatening with death any person who harmed the Jews.

The mob, intimidated at this display, began to disperse. Its ardor was further damped by the sudden disappearance of one of the ringleaders. Ultimately, he was discovered in a cesspool, in

which he had fallen while creeping stealthily, with flint and tinder, with the intention of setting fire to the Ghetto at some unfrequented spot. Thus, at length, after an anxious interval, the mob dispersed; though a detachment of bombardiers was left in the Ghetto to maintain order. At dawn, there arrived a special messenger from Venice, bearing a proclamation from the Doge, threatening death to any person who insulted or molested the Jews. Thus, gradually, quiet was restored, after a reign of terror which had lasted for six days; though a certain amount of ill-feeling continued for some time afterwards. It was not until Fra Marco d'Aviano (an influential figure, who had recently arrived from the besieging camp) authoritatively denied the reports which were current against the Jews, that the danger could be said to be over. These events created a considerable impression upon contemporary minds. Three accounts of them were composed by participants—one in Italian and two in Hebrew. The community, full of thankfulness at its escape, instituted an annual celebration in honor of its deliverance, to be kept each year on the tenth of Elul, the anniversary of the frustrated attack. This, under the name of the Purim of Buda, continued to be observed until our own days.

Greatest amongst the glories of Padua was of course its ancient University, famous above all for its school of medicine, to which students flowed in great numbers from every corner of Italy and beyond. The relations of the Jews with this institution were close and continuous.

In the first place, their assistance was generally

found indispensable by the students, traditionally an impecunious class. Indeed, when in 1415 the Jewish loan banks were temporarily closed, the students presented a petition for immediate reopening. Subsequently, they became amongst the most assiduous of the clients of the Jews. Such relations did not foster the best of feelings; a fact which led on February 12th, 1519, to a threatening riot, in which part of the Jewish quarter was sacked. The captain himself had to intervene, accompanied by an armed force; and order was not restored until many persons on both sides had been injured.

A standing grievance of the student body against the Jewish community lay in one especial fact. Their traditional respect for the bodies of the dead made the Jews unwilling to furnish their quota of corpses to the medical school for dissection. At the time of the opening of the anatomical theater, they had obtained exemption from the duty by a considerable annual payment. Nevertheless, from the sixteenth century onwards, the students began to resent their enjoyment of this privilege. Bodies were sometimes intercepted on their way to burial; and frequently the graves in the cemetery were violated. The Senate repeatedly issued orders forbidding this disgraceful conduct, but all to no avail. The Jews were compelled to construct a secret hiding place in the Ghetto in which, in cases of necessity, the bodies could be concealed until the funeral. In 1624, a cortège was stopped in the streets and the body dragged away; and only the indignation felt by the citizens at large prevented it from being taken for dissection. In

1680, when a young Jew was murdered, there was similar trouble with regard to the body, which actually had to be rescued from the dissecting table. As late as 1721, a confirmation of the ancient Jewish immunity was required. A more comical case of kidnaping took place on one occasion in the sixteenth century. It was a year of dearth; and only one perfect citron could be obtained in the city for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. This was shared by all of the communities. One day while it was being taken from the German to the Italian synagogue for use in divine service, it was seized by a riotous band of students, who would not restore it before they were paid an immense ransom!

Sometimes, the baiting of the Jews received semi-official sanction. It was a universal student prerogative throughout Italy to pelt them with snow balls on the occasion of the first snowfall of the year. This was compounded for in Padua by a tribute of six ducats, which served to defray part of the cost of one of the public spectacles which the students were accustomed to give annually. Even after such customs had been abolished as far as other sections of the population were concerned, the Jews had to continue to pay a ransom from persecution, providing a gift of sweetmeats for all the student body, numbering something like one thousand souls in all. A further tribute, consisting by immemorial custom of fat capons—compounded for subsequently by a monetary equivalent—had to be paid upon St. Martin's Day (February 13th). It was the gathering of this tribute that led to the outbreak of the student

riot of 1519. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, these customary levies involved the community in an annual expense of about forty ducats.

The connection of the Jews with the *Studium* of Padua was not, however, monopolized (as was the case in the other European universities) by such untoward events. More than one distinguished Jewish scholar actually taught in the University; not, indeed, in an official capacity (as is usually reported), but nevertheless so effectively as to leave a considerable impression upon the mind of later generations. Elijah Delmedigo was summoned from Venice to act as umpire in a philosophical dispute which broke out in the University at the close of the fifteenth century, and afterwards continued to teach there more or less formally. A similar tale is told at a subsequent date, of Abraham de Balmes—physician, Rabbi, and philosopher like the other. Judah Minz, who died in 1508, is reported, apocryphally, to have followed this example so efficaciously that a statue was erected to him in the Great Hall of the University.

It was neither as martyrs nor as teachers, but as pupils, that the Jews were most characteristically associated with the University of Padua. It was mainly in the famous faculty of medicine that their interest lay. Elsewhere in Europe, any unbeliever was automatically, and in most cases statutorily, excluded from studying in the universities. Italy did not follow the general rule, and there is record of isolated Jewish physicians having studied and graduated at Naples, Perugia, Siena, and Pisa in the era of the Renaissance. This was, however, made increas-

ingly difficult in 1564 when, under the stress of the counter Reformation, the papal bull, *In sacrosancta Beati Petri*, made it obligatory for any graduate or candidate for graduation to take an oath upon the Gospels and to make a public profession of the Catholic faith. It was now that the turn of Padua arrived. Hitherto, Jewish graduations here had been rare. The original statutes of the University had expressly excluded any Jew. At this period, moreover, the degree ceremony was little less than a religious function, the accompanying formalities being conducted with great pomp by the Bishop, who was at the head of the examining body. A special papal license was accordingly necessary, here as elsewhere, before any Jew could graduate; the first instance of which there is record is that of Leone Benaia di Nigro of Imola, in 1409.

With the counter Reformation, however, conditions changed. Padua, by virtue of its geographical position, had become the Mecca of medical students from the Teutonic countries beyond the Alps, most of them Protestant. Despite the papal bull of 1564, it was necessary to make some provision for the graduation of these heretics. At the beginning, while Catholics continued to appear before the Sacred College as formerly, all non-Catholics (including Jews) were admitted by the Count Palatine, with a much simpler ceremony. In 1615 this right was abrogated and despite the protests of the Church, the *Collegio Veneto* was instituted for the same purpose.

From the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of

the eighteenth century, Padua was thus the great center for the Jewish students of medicine. Many came from the neighboring Italian communities. But the schools of Padua were famous also in the *Judengasse* in Germany and in Poland, and from them came many Jewish students, some of whom achieved remarkable success. More than one ended up at Constantinople as physician to the Grand Vizier or to the Sultan himself. Frequently, promising young men were sent at the expense of the communities of Cracow, Lublin or Grodno to study medicine in Italy, so that on their return they might act as the congregational physicians. Though from 1654 the Polish section of the student body resolved that henceforth no unbelieving Jew might claim admittance to their 'nation,' they continued to force them to acquire a certificate of protection at high cost. Some of the Jews thereupon endeavored to be enrolled amongst the German 'nation'; but the Poles indignantly demanded compensation for this loss of perquisites. It has been conjectured that the influence of the doctors who studied in Padua is responsible for the presence in Yiddish of one or two phrases that seem to be of Italian origin. Besides these medical students, four youths belonging to the community of the city were empowered to be sent to the university to study conveyancing and law; though they were permitted to practice only for their coreligionists.

The Jewish students at the University of Padua possessed one special privilege: they were exempted from the obligation of wearing the red hat which was

supposed to mark off every Jew for contumely, and permitted to wear a black headdress like the other students. To compensate for this they had special burdens. Originally, upon the day of their graduation, they had to keep an open table with ample food and drink for all who cared to come; and one may readily imagine that some of the more impecunious Gentiles took care to arrange their diet on the previous days in such a way as to do justice to this enforced hospitality. Ultimately, this right was compounded for by a fixed tribute. Every Jew, on graduation, had to give the beadle of the university one hundred and seventy pounds of sweetmeats. These were done up in thirty-five packets—one for each of the thirty-five 'nations' into which the student body was divided, with extra rations for the Anglo-Scottish and German sections (as being the most numerous) and for the servants of the university. Thus, it was reckoned that while it cost the ordinary student 886 lire to be graduated, the corresponding expense for a Jew amounted to no less than 1,650 lire.

Yet this was an insufficient deterrent. Jewish youth continued to flow to Padua for study from all over Europe. From 1517 to 1619, eighty Jews were graduated there; from 1619 to 1721, no less than one hundred and forty-nine. If the length of the ordinary course was seven years, there must have been an average of about ten Jews—one per cent, that is, of the total number of students—always present in the university; besides the few native Paduans studying law. In the meantime, they were by no

means cut off from Hebraic influences. Many of them frequented the famous Talmudical schools of the Ghetto, qualifying perhaps as Rabbis at the same time that they passed through the university. When a Jew was graduated, it was considered an occasion for general jubilation among his coreligionists; and numerous odes are extant, some printed and some in manuscript, congratulating some fortunate youth "upon the day that the Crown of Medicine and Philosophy was placed upon his head."

A list of Jewish graduates at Padua would comprise some of the most notable figures of seventeenth and eighteenth century history. There was Tobias Cohen, a curious example of the restless Jewish student of former times, who, born in Germany of Polish parents, was brought up in France, studied mainly in Italy, became physician to the Grand Vizier in Constantinople, and died in retirement in Jerusalem; assuredly, a typical member of the 'tribe of the wandering foot and weary breast.' He was the author of a famous scientific and medical compendium, entitled *Ma'aseh Tobiyah* (Venice 1708), which was repeatedly reissued, and gave many a Polish student his first introduction to modern science. There were several members of the Cantarini family (whose ancestor had established himself in Padua after the massacre at Asolo), including Isaac Vita Cantarini, Rabbi of the community and author of a remarkable work describing the *émeute* of 1684. Another was Samson Morpurgo, an illustrious Hebrew scholar, born under Austrian rule at Gradisca d' Isonzo, who finally became Rabbi at Ancona, and

there were several more of his family. There was Jekuthiel Gordon, of Vilna, who threw up his medical studies in order to devote himself to the cabala under the guidance of Moses Hayim Luzzatto, the famous Paduan mystic, and father of modern Hebrew poetry. There was Ephraim Luzzatto of San Daniele (cousin of the last named, and son and brother of other practitioners who had been graduated at the same place), who became physician to the Spanish and Portuguese community in London and was one of the most charming poets of his day. These are only a few names chosen casually out of a vast number which might be mentioned. For many generations, down to the close of the eighteenth century, Jews far and near had occasion to bless that tolerance which allowed their brethren in faith freely to study the art of healing in one place at least on the surface of the globe. It is a debt of gratitude which even today may well be remembered.

CHAPTER IX

THE COMMUNITIES OF THE STATO DEL MAR

The Republic of Venice, at the height of its power, was far removed from the city state which it had been in origin. It was the capital and center of a mighty empire, which it governed with a firmness and a wisdom almost unique. Many of its dependencies themselves contained Jewish communities of considerable importance, each with its own history and its own individuality. This was especially the case in the Greek Islands and the surrounding coastlands—the *Stato del Mar*, as the territory was called—in part of which the Republic retained her overlordship for six centuries, down to the period of her fall.

Negroponte and Crete

Venice first became a great Colonial power in 1204, when, in consequence of her share in the piratical expedition which was dignified by the name of the Fourth Crusade, her supremacy was recognized in most of the islands of the Greek archipelago, with much of the neighboring coast. To this, she added by purchase the island of Crete, or Candia. All over her new conquests, there were dotted Jewish communities of considerable antiquity, the history of which can be traced back in many cases to classical

times. The most important at this period was probably that on the island of Euboea, otherwise and more picturesquely known as Negroponte. Here, in 1170, Benjamin of Tudela had found living in the capital, Chalcis, a congregation of two hundred Jews: no doubt engaged, like their compatriots on the mainland, in silk weaving and dyeing. In Candia, at the time of its acquisition by the Venetians, the Jews already had a long and variegated history, dating back to the time of the second temple; indeed, so early as the fourth century, the island had given birth to a pseudo-Messiah. On the mainland of the Peloponnese, or Morea, the most important community under Venetian rule was that of Modon, where a number of Jewish silk workers found employment.

From the moment of the triumph of Christianity in the Byzantine Empire, the condition of the numerous Jewish communities it contained had never been peculiarly enviable. No inducement was needed to continue this tradition. In Negroponte, a disproportionate share of the general burdens was still laid upon Jewish shoulders. When, in 1304, it was desired to enclose with walls the Venetian quarter of the city of Chalcis, which had hitherto been open, the Jews were forced to defray the cost—a precedent which they were forced to follow later in the century when the town was fortified more strongly against the Turk. If the salary of the Venetian *bailo* was to be increased, it was at their expense. When early in the fifteenth century a commission was sent out from Venice to lighten the financial burdens of the islanders, it brought no relief to the Jews, whose taxes

were doubled in order to lessen the burden on their neighbors. Even the occasional exemption of some meritorious Jewish family from taxation was done at the expense of their coreligionists, who generally had to make up the deficit. In 1355, a walled Jewish quarter with only three gates was formed on the southern side of the town. To this quarter the Jews were rigorously confined, and in 1402, they were strictly prohibited from possessing real estate outside —a measure enforced some years earlier than in any other part of the Venetian possessions. Though, in order to encourage immigration, any inhabitant of the city received the Venetian franchise after ten years' residence, the Jews were expressly excluded. According to a common medieval abuse, they were compelled to provide the public executioner out of their ranks. However, the Venetian rule, if severe, was just; and they preferred to come under the direct authority of the *bailo*, to whom they paid nearly ninety pounds yearly in taxes, rather than remain 'Jews of the Lombards', to whom they had given only half that amount. They showed themselves, moreover, peculiarly loyal subjects, as was proved on more than one occasion. Thus, for example, David of Negroponte was created a Venetian citizen by the Doge Lorenzo Tiepolo (1268–1275), who recommended him warmly to the local authorities on account of his outstanding services to the State both in person and in substance. When, after a bitter struggle, the Venetian rule yielded in 1470 to that of the Turks, the prominence and individuality of the community quickly came to an end.

At Crete (Candia), conditions under Venetian rule were very much the same. At the beginning of the period, there were living here between five hundred and a thousand Jews, the most important community on the island being at Canaea. Others were to be found at Candia and Retimo, where their name was given to one of the city gates. A few lived, also, scattered about the smaller places, notably Milopotomo, Castelnuovo, and Bonifacio, where they inhabited the so-called 'Jews' Castle.' The economic importance of Cretan Jewry was considerable. They dominated the export trade of the island. Some of them despatched sugar to countries as far off as Austria. Others shipped wine to Venice and the mainland. Several were engaged in medicine—amongst them, as it appears, one or two notorious quacks.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, to the intense disapproval of the rest of the inhabitants, who appealed dolefully to the Venetian Senate against them, the Jews entirely dominated the trade and commerce of the city of Retimo. Here they owned all of the shops in the public square, as well as many outside it. The contributions which they made to the revenue were of the greatest importance. From 1387 to 1395 the ordinary taxation imposed upon them increased from 1,000 *hyperpheres* yearly to 4,500, in spite of a decrease in their numbers. This was quite apart from extraordinary impositions, which were levied ruthlessly, particularly in time of war. Thus, from 1439 to 1441, they had to make themselves responsible for a sum of 4,000 ducats yearly for emergency expenditure, though all the

rest of the population together paid only an equal amount—and that on a single occasion only. At other times, they were compelled to make heavy loans to the government for the equipment of galleys and similar military purposes. In 1403, the Jews of Canaea were forced to defray one-half of the expenses of repairing the fortifications, on the pretext that they benefited thereby to an especial degree. In 1392, they had been required to provide a guard of thirteen men to man the ramparts near their own quarter; but this was subsequently compounded for by an annual payment. They had to defray one-fifth of the cost of cleaning the streets. Money was even extracted from them for the construction of the port, in return for permission to reopen a synagogue which had been closed by order of the government.

Their economic activities were constantly hampered. They were forbidden to lend money on mortgage or to engage in brokerage. The amount of interest which they were allowed to charge was limited. They were forbidden to open shops in gentile neighborhoods, or to acquire real estate. An exception to this was made only so far as their own quarter was concerned. The rules governing the wearing of the yellow badge of shame was so strictly enforced that even the houses of the Jews on the island had to be marked out by a yellow circle or θ which had to be affixed above the doorways.

Amongst the other abuses were the disproportionately heavy fines imposed upon them if they left the doors of their houses open at night, stirred abroad at a late hour, or failed to carry lighted lanterns in

the street after sunset. The priests and soldiers did what they could to add to their discomfort. The local ecclesiastical authorities exacted from them a ducat a head each year at Epiphany for candles for use in church, and were barely satisfied even with this. The common people regarded it as their prerogative to pasture their animals in the Jewish burial ground. Similar abuses prevailed at Coron and Modon, in the Morea. In 1465, the annoyances had become so great that the community sent a representative to Venice to secure redress.

Worse than these petty annoyances was an accusation of the desecration of the Host which was levied against the Jews of Crete in 1452. Nine outstanding members of the community were arrested, and were sent to Venice for trial. They were, it is true, triumphantly acquitted; but nevertheless, fresh proceedings were taken against them on the protext that the verdict had been won by bribery. The Senate, however, refused to endorse this view; and thus, after two years of anxiety, the episode was closed. Perhaps the annual celebration which the Jews of Candia formerly observed each year on the eighteenth of Tammuz was connected with this escape. There seems to have been a considerable difference between the treatment which the Jews received in one place on the island and another. This inevitably resulted in a considerable displacement of population. A traveler of 1571 found living in Canaea, previously the greatest Jewish center on the island, a community of only 300, cooped up in a special quarter near the fortifications. At Candia, however, there were now

some eight hundred, living under pleasant conditions in the best part of the city, near the sea, with beautiful houses and gardens.

The organization of Cretan Jewry was interesting and very characteristic. Every two years, the principal householders met together and elected a governing council of ten *maggiorenti*. These in turn selected the constable (*condestabile*), who represented the Jews of the island in their dealings with the civil authority and was responsible for the maintenance of internal discipline. This regular sequence was interrupted in 1593, when the incumbent constable retained office for ten years and refused to retire. To make his hold the more effective, he secured the keys of the synagogue, which he refused to give up unless he was confirmed in the position. An appeal to the Doge was necessary to overthrow this revolutionary autocrat.

Considerable light is thrown upon the social and religious conditions of Cretan Jewry under Venetian rule by a domestic code of laws of the medieval period. When a wandering German Rabbi, one Baruch, son of Isaac, arrived on the island in 1328, he was shocked by the state of affairs which he found. Betrothed couples were permitted familiarities which made foreign observers of that puritanic age stand aghast. The ritual bath was used as a communal wash-house, and reduced to a shameful state of filth. Commercial morality, especially when Gentiles were concerned, was not so good as it should have been. Jew cited Jew before the civil courts with the utmost indifference, instead of having disputes peacefully

settled by the Rabbis according to Talmudic law. Excommunications were pronounced, and synagogal services interrupted, on trivial pretexts. Even when some domestic bereavement occurred, the general body showed itself utterly indifferent. Jews had no scruple in offering higher rentals for houses in the possession of coreligionists, and thus bringing about ejection. Work was continued on Fridays right up to nightfall. Attendance at service and at communal meetings was slack. At prayer time, many persons preferred to saunter down to the seashore or lounge about the market place, or even watch trials in the courts of law, rather than be in their places in the synagogues. Not that there was any ground of complaint with regard to the provision of these, there being then four in the city of Candia alone, one named after the Prophet Elijah himself!

The visiting Rabbi, horrified at this state of affairs, called together fifteen of the principal householders and with their collaboration drew up a series of ten ordinances which were thenceforth to be incumbent upon the community, in the hope that matters might be improved. These *Takkanot*, as they were called, seem to have been neglected; and some years later a native scholar, Rabbi Zedaka, reissued them in an amended form more appealing aesthetically to local literary taste. Henceforth, their enforcement was to devolve upon the constable.

Small though the community of Candia was, it gave origin to a number of persons of great importance in Jewish history. Particularly important was the Delmedigo family, which (as its name shows) had

an especial predilection for the practice of medicine. The first known member of the family came, like many other Cretan Jewish notables, from Germany, at the close of the fourteenth century. One of his sons, known as Abba ha-Zaken, built a synagogue on the island at his own expense; another, Shemariah, called the Cretan, was a notable philosopher and grammarian. He was grandfather of Elijah Delmedigo, one of the most famous exponents of Aristotelian philosophy in his age, who (as already mentioned) emigrated to Italy, taught philosophy in the University of Padua, was one of the brilliant circle which surrounded Lorenzo de'Medici at Florence, and became the instructor in Hebrew of Pico della Mirandola. A collateral descendant of his was Joseph Delmedigo (1591–1655), philosopher, physician, and sceptic, who studied at Padua, practiced in Egypt, was medical attendant to Prince Radziwill in Vilna, acted as Rabbi in Hamburg and Amsterdam, became communal physician at Frankfort, and died in Prague. Among his works, which touch on a wide variety of subjects, are included several Hebrew philosophical classics; and he is remembered as the first modern Jewish scholar to enter into friendly relations with the Karaites. Another noteworthy Cretan family was that of Capsali, which originated in the town of that name in the Morea. Moses Capsali was Rabbi in Constantinople at the time of its capture by the Turks in 1453, and became a power at the Sultan's court. Elkanah, his kinsman, was constable of the Jews of Candia towards the close of the century. He was thus at the head of the community at the

time of the expulsion from Spain, and was largely responsible for the heroic measures taken to relieve the refugees, large numbers of whom were arriving destitute on the island. In a single day, he is reported to have collected on their behalf the sum of 250 ducats; and under his direction the community sold all the gold and silver ornaments of their synagogues to raise additional funds. Elkanah's son, Elijah Capsali (1490–1555), who had studied medicine and Talmudics contemporaneously at Padua, succeeded his father as one of the heads of Cretan Jewry. He was active in relief work at the time of the terrible plague introduced into the island in 1523 by the refugees from Rhodes, just captured by the Turk, and which literally decimated the community. Above all he is now remembered as the author of a couple of contemporary chronicles—a Jewish History and a Chronicle of Venice—which are among the main sources for our knowledge of the condition and sufferings of the Jews at the close of the fifteenth century, and place their author in the front rank of Jewish historiographers of his age.

In spite of the intolerance from which they suffered, the Jews of Crete were peculiarly loyal to the government, as they proved in a striking manner on more than one occasion. Twice, in 1453 and again in 1462, plots to overthrow the Venetian rule (the first under the auspices of a local Bishop) were discovered and revealed by a certain Jew named David Maurogonato, whose family hailed from a township of that name in the Morea. The ill feeling which he aroused through this ruined him economically. In

consequence, he was endowed with certain privileges and exemptions which his descendants continued to enjoy until late in the eighteenth century. The family continued to deserve well of the Venetian government. In 1532, Meir Maurogonato was allowed to go to Venice, though his native place was at the time under siege, on important business; and seven years later he was sent on a delicate mission to Constantinople. Dr. Jacob Maurogonato served with considerable distinction with the Venetian troops in 1647. On the capture of Retimo, he worked with the utmost valor and devotion amongst the sick and wounded in the fortress. He was reputed to be the last Cretan Jew who remained faithful to Venetian rule. Nevertheless, in the final struggle, a few years later, there was another member of the family, Lazzaro, who served with distinction as surgeon-general with the forces in the field. (The work of Dr. Elkanah Circoletto on this occasion has already received mention.) When all was lost, the family traditions were carried on by Jeremiah Maurogonato, who offered to go behind the enemy lines to secure information. The fidelity of the Jews was, however, insufficient to prevent the conquest of the island by the Turks in 1669, after four and a half centuries of Venetian rule. From that date, their history lost its individuality, and was similar to that of their co-religionists elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire.[27]

[27] It is interesting to note that Isaac Pesaro Maurogonato, who belonged to the same family on the maternal side, was one of the great names of the Venetian Revolution of 1848. Thus the ancient patriotic tradition was perpetuated.

Spalato

In Dalmatia, the most important Jewish settlement under Venetian rule was Spalato. In this neighborhood, the Jews had lived since classical times, a necropolis dating back to the first centuries of the Christian era having recently been found in the neighboring city of Salona. It was not, however, until after the expulsion from Spain that the local community first enters into history. Its foremost figure was a certain Daniel Rodrigues (whose name seems to indicate Marrano origin) to whom Spalato owes a deep debt of gratitude. He was the first to realize the important commercial potentialities in the position of the city—a connecting link between the Christian and the Moslem world, through which, if proper provision were made, the entire commerce between Turkey and Italy could be made to pass. All that was required to make it the first port of the Balkans, outdoing even Ragusa and Narenta, was the construction of a harbor with the necessary appurtenances. All of this was ably expounded in a memorial presented to the Venetian Senate in 1577. Despite local opposition, Rodrigues at last had his way, and was empowered to supervise the execution of the scheme. At the same time, special privileges were granted to the Jews who were willing to establish themselves in the new commercial center and assist in fostering its trade. Others were subsequently invited to establish a loan bank for the benefit of the poor. The first 'consul' of the new community was Daniel Rodrigues himself. He re-

mained a person of some importance in the counsels of the Republic, which consulted him frequently on commercial matters; and the official encouragement of the settlement of the Ponentine Jews in Venice, as well as the development of the Levantine trade, was largely due to his advice. When in 1589 the commerce in the Adriatic was disturbed by the Dalmatian pirates known as the Uscocchi (who purported to prey upon Turks and Jews alone, but actually showed little religious or national discrimination in their activities), he was empowered to go to Lissa to treat with them, succeeding in the end in obtaining the release of the women and children whom they had captured.

In the following century, the part of the Jews in local life continued to be important. They owned nearly all the shops in the city. Some entered into partnership with Christians. They controlled wholesale commerce, their relations with Venice on the one hand and with Constantinople on the other throwing the whole of the import and export trade into their hands. They monopolized the silk trade with the Morea. The government repeatedly turned to them for assistance, especially for the secret intelligence which their widespread connections with the Turkish empire enabled them to give. Several Marrano merchants settled in the city in order to revert to their ancestral faith, and swelled its prosperity. Joseph Penso, who occupied the position of 'consul' of the Jewish community about 1630, worthily carried on the traditions of Rodrigues. In 1631, he was sent on an important diplomatic mission

to the pasha of Bosnia, which he fulfilled to the general satisfaction; and on another occasion he went on a similar errand to a local emir. His widespread activities enabled him to provide the government with important secret intelligence, as well as to be of use to it in matters of finance. His services in fostering local trade were so considerable as to receive a special mention in the official despatches. In the Turkish Wars, the Jews served with distinction. During the siege of 1657, they took over the defence of one of the city towers, which was afterwards known as the Post of the Jews. They took part in the fiercely contested actions under the city walls. They acted as pioneers, relieved the soldiers on guard, contributed money for the construction of galleys, furnished clothing and other necessities for the troops and the military hospitals, dragged the cannon into action, gave generous hospitality to the soldiers in their houses, and generally conducted themselves as exemplary citizens, receiving special eulogies from the authorities when peace was restored.

In spite of all this, the local population viewed askance the prominent part which Jews were occupying in economic life. From the middle of the seventeenth century, there was a progressive attempt to exclude them from one occupation or another. First, they were forbidden to possess real estate. In 1713–14, after a fierce struggle, they were prohibited from dealing in grain or victuals. The result was an immediate increase in the price of food, for which some rapacious Christian merchants charged as much as double now that the competition was removed.

In the period of scarcity which followed, the Jews were invited to reënter this branch of commerce, so that the prohibition lapsed of itself. It was as well that it did; for it was thanks to a couple of them, Isaac Penso and Vita Levi, that the horrors of famine were not added to those of plague during the terrible outbreaks of 1729–1732, when the Jewish physician Joseph Senior distinguished himself by his devotion. In consequence of the failure of this experiment, a further attempt to exclude the Jews from dealing in food stuffs, in 1748–1751, was opposed by the municipality, and similarly ended in failure.

Another calling in which the Jews of Spalato had taken a prominent part was that of tailor. In order to rid themselves of this competition, the Christian tailors formed themselves into a guild, for which they endeavored to obtain the approval of the authorities at Venice. The struggle continued for many years. It was only after nearly a quarter of a century that official approval was forthcoming for the formation of the guild, with its implicit consequences of the exclusion of all non-Christians from the clothing industry, whether as tailors or as dealers. A Jewish deputation went to Venice to protest, and ultimately succeeded in obtaining redress. This was, however, a last triumph. The reaction against the Jews in the Venetian territories at the close of the eighteenth century, affected the community of Spalato more than any other. For the first time, they were restricted to a Ghetto. Many emigrated, so that the total population became reduced from about 250 souls, or forty-eight families, in 1749 to only 173 in 1796. Cooped

up rigorously as they were in their own quarter, they suffered severely in the plague of 1784. The community began to incur a heavy debt. Their commerce decayed. Utter extinction seemed to be a matter only of years.

From this belated reaction, the Jews of Spalato were saved by the downfall of the Republic. In the process, however, they ran grave perils. When the news of the revolutionary movement at Venice reached Spalato, it was received with anything but general approval. It was alleged that the Republic had ceased to be a Christian state; and Jews, whose sympathies were obvious, were accused of being mainly responsible. The latter meanwhile remained for safety in their quarter. The synagogue was kept open day and night, and ten persons continually remained in it reading psalms, and imploring the divine mercy. When Colonel Matutinovic, who had taken the lead in the revolutionary movement, was attacked and killed, his head was placed upon a lance and the mob rushed with it to the Ghetto. The Jews, however, were by now prepared. Not content with spiritual provision, they had taken the precaution of recruiting a garrison amongst the more friendly elements in the population, including a number of butchers, under the command of a certain Silovic, called Sale. No less than three hundred armed to the teeth, were now ready to meet any emergency. At the sight the attacking mob paused in its onward rush. Silovic seized the opportunity to harangue them and, partly by blandishments and partly by threats, succeeded to some extent in appeas-

ing them. The good work was completed by the Jews, who sent out meat, bread, and wine with instructions to drink their health. This was done with a will. Upon the next day, the news arrived that, by the treaty of Campoformio, a large part of the Venetian possessions, including Spalato, had been assigned to Austria. Henceforth, the Jews could be assured at least of freedom from disturbance. The gates of the Ghetto remained, however, until the French occupation in 1806, when they were destroyed, and all restrictions were removed. On the fall of Napoleon, Dalmatia passed again to Austria, but the new won liberty of the Jews remained undisturbed; and today, under Jugo-Slavian rule, Spalato is still the seat of a small community. The majority of its members are newcomers from the larger centers of the Balkan peninsula. But they are heirs to an ancient and honorable tradition, dating back to the time when the Jews of Spalato, with Daniel Rodrigues at their head, played a dominant part in local life and prosperity.

Corfu

The Jewish settlement at Corfu is at once the most modern and the most interesting of all those of the *Stato del Mar*.

No community is known to have existed in Roman Corcyra; and Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, visiting the island at the close of the twelfth century, found there only one Jew, named Rabbi Joseph. In 1214, it lost something of its political insularity, being conquered by Michael I (Angelos), despot of

Epirus. Under the rule of his house, which followed the invariable autocratic policy of favoring minority elements, the population of the island increased. The earliest arrivals came no doubt from the neighboring mainland of Greece, where Jews had been settled almost from time immemorial, but which the growing military unrest and political disturbances had rendered less and less attractive for peaceful habitation. Thus, when in 1267 the Angevin rulers of the kingdom of Naples assumed possession of the island, there was already in it a Jewish community of considerable proportions.

The government of the house of Anjou was, in intention, benign; but it was generally absentee. Hence, although the central authorities issued numerous decrees for the protection of the Jews of their island dependency, the local magnates frequently subjected them to a variety of petty persecutions. Their beasts of burden, clothing, furniture, and sometimes even their beds were requisitioned in case of emergency. They were forced to equip the royal galleys and to serve upon them in time of war. They were compelled to appear before the courts of justice upon the Sabbath, and sometimes even to desecrate that day by forced labor. Most objectionable of all, the public gallows was erected in their burial-ground, and (a not uncommon abuse in the Middle Ages) they were forced to act as executioners of capital punishments and the other unsavory sentences characteristic of the time. All of this was strictly forbidden by Philip I in a decree of 1324—the first of a long series to a similar effect. Mary of

Bourbon, in 1365, similarly absolved them from all special taxes and imposts, excepting one for the purpose of lighting the streets of the city, which apparently devolved upon them by ancient tradition. Despite the petty annoyances suffered from time to time, the community of Corfu was in general treated with consideration and respect by the other inhabitants—so much so that one of its members was frequently designated to form part of the delegations which were sent periodically to the seat of government to request the confirmation of old privileges or to supplicate the grant of new ones. Thus it came about that when, in the year 1386, the population was tired of being implicated in the constant dynastic struggles for the throne of Naples, and an embassy was sent to Venice to arrange the terms of surrender, the Jew David Semo was one of the six members of which it was composed.

The policy of the government of Venice toward the Jews of its new island dependency was in striking contrast to that which it had consistently adopted hitherto in connection with their coreligionists at home. Here, any commercial jealousy which might be felt was absolutely outweighed by the sheer necessity of conciliating so important an element in a population predominantly alien. Only a fortnight after the formal acceptance by the Doge of the overlordship of this new dependency, he issued a decree acknowledging the importance of the Jews to the island, confirming all of their old privileges, and forbidding the saddling upon them of any burdens other than those incumbent upon the rest of the

population. The example thus set was never abandoned. The Jews of Corfu continued to be treated with a consideration and respect rare in the extreme for that age; and their claim that they were 'citizens and denizens' of the island was never denied, either in word or in deed. When in 1515 a delegation of six persons was chosen to go to Venice to discuss certain fresh concessions, the Jew Joseph Maycha was among its number. In the next century, one Samuel Abdalla acted in a similar capacity. In Venice itself, Jewish merchants from Corfu, together with Turkish subjects from the Levant, shared many privileges from which the rest of their coreligionists were debarred, and they were expressly exempted from many of the humiliating regulations which were current. When, in 1571, in thanksgiving for the victory of Lepanto, the expulsion of the Jews from Venice and her dependencies was decreed, those who came from Corfu were specifically excluded; and the utmost favor that could be granted to any deserving Venetian Hebrew was to concede him the rights of his Corfiote coreligionists. On the island, they had to bear no special burden other than the payment of one-eighth of the total budget of the city; being in consequence represented by one of their own number among the tax collectors. This was in fairly just proportion to their numbers, which amounted in the middle of the sixteenth century to four hundred householders, a century later to five hundred, and to just under twelve hundred souls in 1760.

The earliest Jewish settlers in Corfu, as we have seen, came from the mainland of Greece. With

them, they brought their own distinctive rite of prayers, at that time practiced through the whole of the Byzantine Empire. The persecutions on the mainland had decimated these ancient congregations; and when, at the close of the fifteenth century, the expulsion from Spain took place, the superior culture and number of the exiles overwhelmed the remainder. Before long, they became absolutely assimilated to the new comers in language, in civilization, and in religious practices. The ancient Byzantine rite thus lingered on, with local differences, in only two places other than a couple of synagogues in Constantinople itself. One was Kaffa, in the Crimea; the other was Corfu. Its following on the island was never sufficiently great to have justified its publication. It has therefore been preserved in manuscript only, down to our own days, copies being found in most of the great libraries of Europe and America. However, in recent years, in consequence of local disturbances and the progressive dwindling of population, it has at last gone down before the parvenu Spanish rite, after a pathetic defence which lasted over four centuries.

At the close of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, the indigenous Jewish population of the island was notably increased by successive waves of immigration. On the expulsion from Spain in 1492, some of the refugees settled here. Others, who had settled in the Kingdom of Naples, followed on their heels during the course of the wars which devastated the south of Italy at this period. Among these, special mention should be made of Don Isaac

Abrabanel, scholar, financier, and diplomat, who found here a brief interlude of tranquillity in that long and stormy life which was to end soon after in Venice. Later, these pioneers were succeeded by certain of the Marranos who had remained in the Peninsula paying lip service to Christianity, for example, the physician Moses Levy, *alias* Jorge Mendes Ximenes, of Vizieu in Portugal, who practiced on the island in the first half of the seventeenth century; Diogo Joseph, a physician and poet of repute; and above all Immanuel Aboab, who in 1607 appeared on important business before Horatio del Monte, the Venetian commander in chief, with whom he subsequently carried on a learned correspondence. Finally, when in 1540 the Jews were definitely expelled from the kingdom of Naples, many of the refugees came to Corfu, where they brought with them their own Apulian dialect and ritual of prayers. In consequence of this admixture, the usages of the Jewish population of the island formed till recently a veritable palimpsest, in which a whole succession of underlying strata is to be discerned.

Each of the principal congregations, the Greek and the Apulian (to which the Spanish was generally attached), had its own council of administration, presided over by two syndics, or *Memunim*, and two *Parnasim*. The former were elected each year by the council, convoked specially for the purpose by the Venetian governor (known as the *Provveditore*) in his palace. These were responsible for the maintenance of internal discipline. For the discussion of

matters of joint interest, the two councils sat together. Between the various sections, as may be imagined, there was considerable rivalry. In 1642, the Apulian community, shocked at the lax condition of morality on the island, drew up a series of regulations to cope with this and some other abuses which had become urgent. They naturally appealed to the Greek congregation for its collaboration. The other (apparently out of a spirit of rivalry rather than a lack of sympathy with the objects in view) refused outright; and it was necessary to apply to the civil authorities for the enforcement of the new code.

Among the many local liturgical peculiarities in vogue among the Greek community, was the practice of reading the book of Jonah, as the lesson of the Prophets in the afternoon service of the Day of Atonement, in a vernacular version dating back to the twelfth or thirteenth century—said to be the oldest prose text in modern Greek now extant. Besides this, certain Greek poems and hymns, with a slight admixture of Hebrew, were occasionally recited in the services both at home and in the synagogues—e.g. on Pentecost and on the New Moon of the month of Adar. The origin of the community was displayed also in a number of other customs, of obvious Hellenic derivation, which remained in vogue among the Jews of Corfu until recent times. On the third night after a birth, when the Three Fates were supposed to visit the child to pronounce its destiny, gold coins and twigs of rue were placed in its swaddling clothes as a propitiatory offering. The old game

of *astragaloi* or knuckle-bones, as known to the ancients, survived amongst them in its primitive form. They delighted in the circular singing-dance, the *choros*, just as it was practiced in the Athens of Pericles. As resident in a city already fortified in the most ancient times, the Jews following the Greek rite observed the second day of the feast of Purim with its full formalities instead of the first. In the synagogue, their readers preserved the nasal chant characteristic of the Greek 'popes.' Among the abuses which it was endeavored to abolish in 1642, was included the custom of tearing out hair and lacerating the flesh at a funeral, as well as the engagement of the women who acted as professional keeners to lament for the departed, whether Jews or Gentiles. Both of these customs (the parallels between which and local usages are obvious), were probably most common amongst the indigenous portion of the Jewish population, whose reluctance to abolish them is therefore more easily understandable.

The other elements in the community similarly retained many customs reminiscent of their origin. Those following the Apulian rite recited on the Ninth of Ab certain elegies in the dialect of southern Italy, with an admixture of Greek, Hebrew, and Venetian. In this language (which, in the long run, they succeeded in imposing in ordinary usage even upon the indigenous elements in the population) they explained also the *Seder* on the eve of Passover, and they even sang their love songs. It is a curious fact that the oldest written specimen of the Apulian dialect is one preserved, in Hebrew characters, by

the refugees who found hospitality in Corfu. Even the Spanish Jews, whose numbers in the island were never considerable, continued to use their own tongue amongst themselves for a considerable period. There is extant, indeed, a polyglot chant embodying all of the languages formerly in use amongst the Jews of Corfu—Hebrew, Italian, Apulian, Greek, and Spanish: a linguistic palimpsest, if there ever was such a phenomenon. Among the other noteworthy customs formerly current on the island, there was one which aroused a good deal of attention in its day, namely the reciting of the *Shema'*—the most solemn prayer of the Synagogue—to a musical accompaniment.

In many ways, the treatment of the Jews of Corfu was something absolutely unparalleled in the Middle Ages; anticipating to some extent, by many centuries, the emancipation which elsewhere came about only after the French Revolution. No restrictions, or very few, were placed upon their economic activities. They were, indeed, allowed to own, outside the bounds of their own quarter, real estate to a total value of no more than 4,000 ducats. Moreover, they were expressly forbidden to possess serfs or to take land and villas on lease, with the exception of one house for the personal use of the lessee. The effect of this regulation, however, could be evaded without much effort by means of mortgages; and if a Jew wanted to acquire any property, he generally had no difficulty in finding some complacent Gentile to act in his name. There was indeed one branch of horticulture in which the Jews of Corfu were famous throughout the Jewish world. It was

in this place that there were grown the citrons for use on the feast of Tabernacles, which were exported all over Europe; and each year the island was visited by itinerant agents from Germany and Poland to make arrangements for the transport.

Excepting as regards agriculture, there was almost no check upon the economic activity of the Corfiote Jews. Being allowed freedom to choose their own employment, they were never forced, as elsewhere, into the profession of money lending. So far was the reverse true that it was actually necessary for the government to take steps to prevent them from falling into the power of Christian usurers. Very many were engaged in manual labor of all sorts. They comprised large numbers of skilled craftsmen, as well as merchants, who carried on an extensive commerce with the mainland and the Levant; the export trade of the island being concentrated to a considerable extent in their hands. The ubiquitous Jewish physician was of course prominent. One of them, Master Angelo, was sent to Venice, in 1408, to represent the community, which he did with considerable distinction. In 1466 the local authorities replaced the superannuated old Greek who had served them for some time as public medical officer, by an able young Jew; much to the dislike of the Venetian Senate which, on being appealed to by the dismissed official, canceled the appointment.

The most unusual occupation open to the Jews of Corfu was, however, the practice of law. This was, elsewhere in Europe, an utter impossibility, and indeed had been officially forbidden at Venice in

1637. An attempt on the part of the government to extend this prohibition to Corfu had, however, to be abandoned after less than a year. Of the Jewish advocates on the island at this period, we know of one, Mordecai Cohen, who was empowered to represent his coreligionists in the law courts in 1654, the privilege being extended to cover Gentiles also two years later. The example thus set was avidly followed; and, of twenty candidates who were admitted to the bar in 1698, no less than seven were Jews. With the passage of time, the Venetian government forgot its past policy and endeavored to extend its domestic intolerance to this island dependency. In 1774 orders were sent to Corfu for all Jewish lawyers to be removed from the courts. A counter petition of the community resulted in a request to the *Provveditore Generale*, Antonio Renier, to make a report on the question. This was favorable in the extreme. It established the fact that the Corfiote Jews had been considered and treated as Venetian subjects uninterruptedly for the past four centuries; that they had exercised freely all trades and professions, including those which were elsewhere closed to them; that they always had taken a prominent part in public affairs; and that the present restriction was justified neither by precedent nor by policy. In consequence, the edict of the previous year was repealed, and the Jewish advocates continued to practice as before without let or hindrance.

The public spirit of the Jews of Corfu was famous. They freely contributed more than their proportionate share to all works of public utility, such as

the construction of fortifications and the erection of fountains. When the old fortress was reconstructed in 1578, they built at their own expense a bridge to lead to it. They paid large sums towards the ordinary expenditure of the city, and contributed heavily to all public loans. Many of the Venetian governors found it convenient to borrow from them not only money, but also furniture, plate, and liveries.

The part which Jews played in civic local life was reflected in the place assigned to them in public ceremonial. At all special solemnities, their Syndics were expected to appear together with those of the Latin and the Greek churches. On these occasions, they were dressed in the same official garb, excepting that they did not carry swords, that their robes were made of cloth instead of silk, and that they wore bagwigs upon their heads instead of full bottomed perruques. Every three years, on the occasion of the appointment of a fresh *Provveditore del Levante*, whose headquarters were at Corfu, the Jews of the island played a notable part in the stately ceremonial with which he was greeted. It devolved upon them to provide the carpet for the streets along which the great man would pass on his way to his installation at the church of St. Spiridion. On his return to his palace, their representatives would wait for him at the entrance, laden with flowers, and, bowing down respectfully at his approach, they would humbly request the confirmation of their privileges.

But it was in time of war that the Jewish services were especially appreciated. In the early Middle Ages, under the rule of the house of Anjou, as we have

seen, they were compelled to equip galleys as well as to serve upon them; though this was considered an abuse, and was subsequently prohibited. It was, however, the recognized duty of every man—Jew as well as Gentile—to serve in the guard on the fortifications four times yearly. In 1431, the community made a loan of 3,000 ducats to the Venetian Senate for military purposes; but their services were by no means exclusively financial. During the first great Turkish siege, in 1537, according to a contemporary report, Jews were prominent in the defence. Their quarter was peculiarly exposed, so that their houses and property suffered disproportionate damage. Nevertheless, they assisted in the construction of new defences and the strengthening of the old, cared for the wounded, loaned money to the government without interest, supported the public finances, and behaved in every respect as model citizens. At the close of the seventeenth century, during the course of the glorious but disastrous wars with Turkey, they similarly made heavy monetary subventions to the government.

When in 1696 the captain of the island endeavored to extort the sum of 10,000 ducats from the Jews, by arresting twenty of the leading members of the community, they successfully protested at Venice against the imposition; though a voluntary offer of five hundred ducats yearly for the duration of the war was gratefully accepted. In the second Turkish siege, of 1716, they assisted manfully in the defence, proving themselves more useful, according to the official account, than any other section of the

population. In the previous year, they had made a voluntary contribution of six hundred ducats for strengthening the fortifications. During the bombardment, their quarter suffered especially. Many shells fell into it and caused great damage, besides leading to several serious outbreaks of fire. Nevertheless, this did not lessen their efforts. Many served under arms in the outposts for the defense of the city. Others worked as pioneers on the fortifications or brought up provisions and munitions to the entrenchments. The Syndics of the community set the example, and urged on the rest to greater efforts. Mordecai Mordo Maurogonato particularly distinguished himself, receiving special mention in the official despatches. When the siege was over, the Venetian generalissimo himself, the Count of Schulemburg, wrote home enthusiastically of the services rendered by the Jewish community in the hour of danger; and the *Provveditore Generale* similarly made public testimony of his gratitude. For a long time after, the date of the raising of the blockade was celebrated each year in every synagogue on the island by a public holiday.

The institution of the Ghetto, almost invariable elsewhere in the Venetian possessions, remained unknown in Corfu. It was inevitable that natural feelings of racial solidarity, coupled with religious convenience, should have drawn the Jews to live together. At the beginning of the period of the Venetian domination, they occupied two streets in the region between the old city and the fortress. This was known as the Jews' Mount. At the begin-

ning of the fifteenth century, when a fresh line of fortifications was constructed, instructions were given for this to be included; but a timely protest secured the Jews from disturbance. A century later, however, the whole of this section of the city was pulled down to make room for fresh defence-works; and the Jews were compelled to find themselves houses wherever they could. This caused great scandal amongst the more fanatical of the population. In 1524 a deputation sent to Venice complained, among other things, that the Jews were living all over the city, just where they pleased—even in the fortress and in the immediate vicinity of Christian churches. Instructions were therefore given for a new Jewish quarter to be created. A section of the city, surrounded by high walls, was assigned for them to live in. Nevertheless, for a long time complaints continued to be made periodically that many of them would not obey instructions. It was only after a struggle which had lasted for nearly a century that the obscurantist party gained the upper hand, and a fresh ordinance of 1622 was rigorously enforced. Henceforth, it was forbidden for any Jew to leave the city without a special permit, or to rent any house other than that in which he himself lived. Still, in more than one important respect, the Jewish quarter of Corfu differed for the better from the Ghettos of Italy. The inhabitants were permitted to purchase outright the houses in which they lived, instead of paying exaggerated rentals to harsh landlords. Christians were not prevented, though they were discouraged, from living there. And above all,

no gates were provided to be closed at night and on the occasion of any major ecclesiastical solemnity; the Jews could leave on their own business whenever they desired. The generally tolerant treatment of the Jews of Corfu was heightened by the fact that the community of the little neighboring island of Zante, where conditions were almost identical, enjoyed no similar privileges, the Ghetto system being applied in all of its severity. The first time that the young Silvio Pellico, one of the foremost Italian writers of the period of the *Risorgimento*, entered the public eye, was in 1785, when he endeavored to stir up a commotion here to procure the release of the Jews from their immurement.

The creation of the Jewish quarter, and the oppressive regulations which accompanied it, give a glimpse of the less pleasant side of Jewish life in Corfu. In spite of the rare toleration shown—due, to some extent, to the long succession of foreign rule—the inhabitants were by no means free from the taint of anti-Jewish feeling. Indeed, according to an ancient local legend, Judas Iscariot was a native of the island; and his compatriots were periodically subjected on his account to considerable maltreatment. Though they had contributed liberally to the construction of the principal public well, an attempt was made to refuse them access to it. They were often harried when they did their marketing. They were sometimes insulted in the streets, shameful advances being made to their women folk, and the children being compelled to execute unpleasant tasks. There was a period when it was positively dangerous

for a Jew to travel alone in the countryside. Though permitted the free exercise of their religion, they were forbidden to indulge in public processions. Their cemetery—the only real estate which they were permitted to possess without protest—was periodically desecrated, until the Venetian government intervened vigorously in 1614. Following the practice which obtained at Rome on the occasion of the election of a Pope, it was incumbent upon them to offer to each new Latin archbishop, on his appointment, a scroll of the Law, an honor which he reciprocated by delivering them an insulting lecture upon their shortcomings. Nor was this all. Throughout Europe, it had been regarded by the rabble as its prerogative to pelt the Jews with stones at Eastertide, in revenge for the Passion; a custom which prevailed, for example, at Béziers in southern France until the Jews bought it off in 1160 with an annual tribute. At Corfu, this degrading practice acquired official status. On certain days of the year (presumably about Easter) stones were thrown down on the Jews from the towers and ramparts by certain public officials, who were ably assisted by the populace; a practice obviously, and confessedly, actuated by the desire to extort money from them. This custom, already ancient, was among the rights for which confirmation was sought from Venice in 1406. The central government, mild and just though its rule was, did not consider it politic to refuse this request, though it characterized the practice as 'contrary to all humanity.' The right was restricted, however, to a few officials who could lay

claim to an ancient prerogative, and was confined to the hours when the Litany according to the Greek rite was chanted in the Jewish quarter. According to one account, this moderation was due to the fact that the practice of stoning caused so much injury to the houses! In compensation to the Corfiotes for the amusement of which they were thus deprived, the Jews of the island were now compelled to wear the Jewish badge, which had hitherto remained, so far as they were concerned, in the realm of legislation. For men, the badge took the form of a large yellow circle or disk, as large as a cake of bread, to be sewn on the breast of the outer garment; a yellow veil was ordered for the women. It does not appear, however, that, in the event, this regulation was strictly enforced.

At the close of the eighteenth century, an incident took place at Corfu which had all of the dramatic elements, as well as the implied pathos, of comic opera romance, and which survives in the legendary recollection of the people of the island even at the present day. One of the most considerable local merchants of the period was an elderly Jew named Vivante, who exported on a large scale to the mainland, and whose name was known and honored at Venice and beyond. With him there lived his orphan granddaughter, Rachel, an unusually beautiful girl of about sixteen. The grandfather had attempted to arrange a match for her with a desirable young man of his own choice. However, she had fallen madly in love with the young Count Spiridion, a member of one of the noblest families of the island,

whose father held in addition an important ecclesiastical dignity. The young man reciprocated her passion, or pretended to. On the night of April 17th, 1776, he succeeded in carrying her off from her grandfather's house, thanks to the treachery of some of his servants. It was a case in which the traditional blindness of love was in part belied, as the young couple's eyesight remained keen enough for them to perceive and systematically remove the most precious of the household property. The outraged old man informed the authorities of what had occurred. An order was made for the girl to be restored to him, as being under age. In the meantime, however, she had intimated her intention of embracing the religion of her lover; and pious Christians could not suffer the idea that so precious a soul should be lost to the faith. The rabble collected from all parts of the city and surrounded the house, refusing to allow her to be brought out. Thrice the troops attempted to disperse the mob, but the attempts were half-hearted, and ended in failure. The authorities finally gave in to popular feeling and the force was withdrawn. Rachel Vivante was conducted to church, baptized, married, and escorted back triumphantly to the Bulgari Palace. The next morning, the *Provveditore*, stirred to action by this slight on his authority, sent a detachment of one hundred soldiers, accompanied by two hundred slaves, to obtain possession of the girl, if necessary by force. She was sent to Venice; and, so far as the historian is concerned, she disappears finally from

the scene. The loss is not one which can be very sincerely deplored.

Despite such incidents, the treatment of the Jews of Corfu had always been better and more humane by far than that of those of the mainland. Hence the French Revolution and the overthrow of the *Serenissima* did not bring about any considerable amelioration in their condition; though in Zante the local community, hitherto less favored, considered it proper to celebrate their liberation in a special Greek hymn. From 1797 to 1799, and again from 1806 to 1815, the Ionian Islands were under French rule, and the Jews enjoyed all the rights of citizens; so much so that their Rabbi now ranked on an equal footing with the Orthodox patriarch and the Catholic bishop. Strangely enough, this change for the better in the attitude of the government reacted unfavorably on the feelings of the population, which from this period became increasingly unfriendly. In 1808 it was necessary for the government to issue a proclamation forbidding the molestation of Jews; and the general state of mind was not improved by the murder of a waiter in a coffee house by a dissolute Jewish gambler in the following year. Under the English protectorate, which succeeded the overthrow of Napoleon, a unique phenomenon occurred. For the only time, probably, in the whole of history, the advent of British rule deteriorated the condition of the Jews. In the inevitable reaction against the French regime, they were deprived not only of their newly won civil rights, but also of some of their ancient prerogatives, including that of prac-

ticing at the bar. When Gladstone went to the Ionian Islands on his mission of inquiry in 1859, he was requested to intervene. His recommendations led to the cession of the whole group to the newly born kingdom of Greece; and all religious beliefs henceforth shared full civil and political rights.

Legislation could not, however, affect the mentality of the population, which became more and more unfriendly with the passage of years. In 1861, through the intervention of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the metropolitan archbishop published an encyclical letter, impressing upon his flock the fact that harsh treatment of the people of Jesus was totally at variance with the Christian faith. In 1864, nevertheless, there was a further outbreak, which resulted in a considerable emigration to more favored parts. A couple of decades later, a poisonous weed was introduced into the island when a Corfiote Jewish family resident at Alexandria was sent home to be tried on a charge of having murdered a Greek boy for ritual purposes a few weeks before the Passover. The accused were all triumphantly acquitted; but the impression caused upon the mind of the superstitious populace was not easily eradicated. In the spring of 1891, a Jewish girl had been found dead; and the doubly ridiculous report was spread that the Jews themselves were guilty of the crime, with the intention of making use of the blood on the approaching Passover festivities. So preposterous an allegation was unexampled even in the fantastic records of anti-Semitic propaganda. Nevertheless, it had an immediate effect. The feelings of

the populace were so aroused that an outbreak of violence was anticipated. The majority of the Jewish population had to leave the island in order to avoid massacre; and only the despatch of British warships, at the request of the Consul General, brought about a restoration of order. The wave of feeling spread even to Zante, where, in spite of the public appeals of the Archbishop, similar violence was threatened. These disturbances, coupled with the economic decay of the island, have resulted in a rapid decrease of the Jewish population, which has emigrated in large numbers to Trieste and Egypt. The unique local traditions, which survived the shock of centuries, have similarly decayed with phenomenal rapidity.. Little is left today to recall the ancient glories of the Middle Ages when the Jewish community of Corfu anticipated in many ways, in its status and its activities, the age of Emancipation.

CHAPTER X

DECLINE, FALL, AND DELIVERANCE

The seeds of the decline of Venetian Jewry go back to the period of its foundation. Venice had become great as a commercial center at a time when the Mediterranean was the highroad of the world's commerce. The discovery of America, with the expansion of outlook and activity which that event ultimately entailed, altered the Mediterranean into a mere backwater. Thus Venetian commerce and prosperity inevitably declined more and more. As far as the Jewish community was concerned, the turning point came with the plague of 1630, which, besides decimating its numbers, resulted in the confiscation and destruction of large quantities of merchandise, and caused many of the prosperous Levantine merchants to return to Turkey. Though (largely as the result of the influx of refugees from northern Europe) the population speedily rose again, attaining shortly after its highest level, the prosperity of the community had suffered a blow, from which it never completely recovered.

In the following period, the constant drain of the Turkish wars tended to sap the prosperity of the Republic in an ever increasing degree. From the middle of the seventeenth century, there was a constant decline in the population of Venice, not-

withstanding the phenomenally rapid recovery after the plague. The Jews were affected more than any other class. The incidence of taxation weighed upon them to a disproportionate extent. The war dislocated the business of the merchants, who formed the wealthiest section of the Jewish population. Moreover, there were now available other places of refuge for persecuted Jews—Amsterdam, London, Hamburg, and, nearer home, Leghorn—which were rapidly outdistancing Venice in commercial importance, and where Jewish life was enabled to attain a dignity and freedom unexampled in recent history. Here, too, there were available all of those channels of making a livelihood which in Venice were so sedulously closed, with freedom from the crushing taxation, ordinary and extraordinary, that was slowly sapping the prosperity of the community.

Accordingly, a steady emigration set in. Traces of the emigrants can be found in all those places mentioned, and many others. It was precisely the wealthier families who departed—in many cases leaving their communal dues unpaid; and each departure was viewed by the community with increasing apprehension. In the early part of the eighteenth century, the allied families of Carvalho, Camis, and Alfarin, which hitherto had been amongst the most important in the Portuguese community, transferred themselves to the growing free port of Leghorn; and all appeals from Venice, backed up by reiterated pronouncements of excommunication, were quite powerless to make them return or pay their outstanding dues. Thus the Jewish

population very rapidly decreased, until, from nearly 5,000 at the middle of the seventeenth century, it numbered a century later little more than 1,500. Notwithstanding this, the taxation levied upon the community as a whole remained stationary. They still had to pay the rentals of all the houses in the Ghetto, occupied or not, and all the other dues which had been exacted from them in the days of their greatest prosperity. Indeed, in one important respect the burden increased. The community still had to maintain the three pawning establishments in the Ghetto, this being one of its most onerous obligations. It was inevitable that, with the general decline of prosperity and the growth of distress, more and more use was made of these facilities, with a loss to the institution on each transaction. Thus, in the period of decline, the burden involved was greater by far than a century before, when the Jewish community had been three times as great. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the total loss on the banks amounted to 300,000 ducats; and it increased steadily every year.

All of this slowly crushed the prosperity of Venetian Jewry out of existence. With every week that passed, conditions became worse. Burdens previously heavy were now unendurable; and it became increasingly difficult to carry all of them. As early as 1691, the *Università* was forced to petition the Doge, pointing out the terrible weight of the obligations with which it was weighed down, and begging for some alleviation. A few years later, in 1695, it was found necessary to make special finan-

cial provision to meet the crisis. The Ponentine community hit upon the expedient of raising money to tide over the bad period (which, it was hoped, would be only temporary) by the sale of annuities, which were eagerly sought by the general population. Thus, a sum of 10,000 ducats secured a person of fifty an income of 1,000 ducats yearly, for life. A couple of years later, in the hopes of securing a greater communal income, the *cassella* system was introduced, with the approval of the authorities, for internal taxation. The sumptuary laws of 1696–1697 were actuated by the same cause, being intended to enforce economy and to disarm gentile jealously. Another expedient tried was raising a loan from members of the community, who were willing to be content with an interest of only 4 per cent. Thus it was possible to escape the exactions of certain patricians, not averse from doing a little business, who consistently charged as much as 8 or 10 per cent. Certain communal pietists, however, objected to any such arrangement. It was forbidden, they said, for Jews to take interest from one another, under whatever circumstances. The community was thus guilty of a manifest breach of Jewish law; and they would far prefer to see it in the hands of the rapacious Christian usurers. In 1706, the Rabbinate of Venice referred the matter to Rabbi David Oppenheim of Prague (the learned and wealthy bibliophile to whom the formation of the nucleus of the Hebrew collection of the Bodleian Library in Oxford was originally due), who decided that, con-

sidering the special circumstances, the innovation might be permitted.

None of these measures, and the other petty expedients which were authorized from time to time, served to remedy the condition of the Jewish community. The population continued to decline; and, with every fresh decrease, the burden upon those who remained became greater and greater.

Between 1714 and 1718, during the course of the final war with Turkey, many vessels belonging to the wealthy Jewish merchants were captured. A great fire destroyed much of the *Ghetto Vecchio* and caused vast damage. The rate of interest at the public bank, where the Jews maintained a million and a half ducats on deposit, became reduced. All this reacted upon the prosperity and numbers of the community at large. In 1603, there had been 271 families paying taxes. A century later, the number was reduced to sixty. In 1737, there were only fifteen, of which a majority seemed to be nearing extinction. The general council of the community, which consisted of all those who paid more than a certain annual minimum in taxation, had numbered in the middle of the eighteenth century approximately 120. This figure became reduced to twenty-three, so that there were hardly sufficient persons available to fill the communal offices. It was found necessary to reduce the number of the Executive Council (*Va'ad Katon*) from seven down to five.

The community became more and more deeply involved in debt. At last, in 1722, it was found to be necessary to take drastic steps. A fresh magistracy

was appointed, called the *Inquisitorato sopra gli Ebrei*, consisting of three nobles, with an ample staff. This was henceforth to have control of the affairs of the community, especially in financial matters. Thus the desperate straits of the Ghetto received official recognition.

The task of the new magistracy was, indeed, superhuman. It had to reconcile three completely divergent interests: to maintain the standard of taxation without reducing the Jews to beggary or neglecting the rights of their creditors. It cannot be said that the task was set about with much discrimination. Any expedient was welcomed, so long as it would bring ready cash, whatever the remoter consequences might be. In 1723, an attempt was made to capitalize the debts of the community by floating a loan of half a million ducats, at 5 per cent, with premiums ranging from 30 per cent to 50 per cent, in the form of 5,000 life annuities qualified for in part by seniority and in part by ballot. This scheme increased the burdens of the community rather than otherwise. In 1726, the financial conditions were still so threatening that the three 'nations' had to come to an agreement amongst themselves to meet the situation. In the same year, it was determined that any Jew from outside Venice who desired to establish himself in the city might do so on making a payment of 500 ducats down. By this, he would be exonerated from any other impost, though he would not be eligible for communal office or even for a voice in elections. This, though it may for the moment have strengthened the

financial situation, ultimately resulted in impoverishing the community still further, as well as weakening its cohesion; so that quarrels between the old settlers and new arrivals became more and more bitter. On the other hand, strangers without capital were repeatedly forbidden to settle in the city.

All of this was quite unavailing. The financial affairs of the community became more and more deeply involved, and there seemed to be no prospect of its ever being able to meet its obligations. It might indeed have been able to recover had the government followed the dictates of fair play and of common sense, and relieved it of the crushing burden of inequitable taxation with which it was laden, treating the Jew, fiscally at least, like any other person. In eighteenth century Italy, however, that was out of the question. Under the circumstances, there was only one solution. It was that which would have been followed by any private individual in the same position. This, however incongruous it may seem, was not a unique phenomenon. During the course of the eighteenth century, more than one community in which the rapacity of the government had overreached itself, and Jewish prosperity had been undermined (including that of Rome) found itself in the same position. In 1735, the *Inquisitori sopra gli Ebrei* presented to the Senate a report upon the present condition of affairs, which was a confession of their own failure. The *Università* owed no less than one million ducats, which there was no prospect of its ever being able to meet. No alternative was left but a suspension of payments.

By an order of the Senate, all of the public claims upon it were held over for a period of six years; legal proceedings for the payment of debts were temporarily quashed; and instructions were given for a meeting of creditors to see whether any arrangement could be reached. This took place shortly afterwards. It was found that 160 creditors, representing claims of 636,521 ducats, were willing to come to an arrangement, while sixty, representing a little less than 300,000 ducats, remained obdurate. According to Venetian law, a majority of two-thirds in such cases was sufficient. Accordingly, the community was officially declared bankrupt.

Notwithstanding all this, the financial problem still continued urgent. It remained impossible for the community to catch up with its enormous liabilities and to recover its solvency; weighed down as it was by the millstone of the banks, which it was still compelled to keep on foot at a continuous loss. Whenever there seemed to be the slightest improvement in the condition of affairs, fresh arrangements were made which immediately nullified the betterment. In 1749, and again in 1753 and 1763, the Senate approved new recommendations of the *Inquisitori sopra gli Ebrei*. In spite of all of this the community weltered more and more deeply in the slough of insolvency. So bad had conditions again become as early as 1743, that it was found necessary to issue a special order for the protection of the various communal officials, who were held to be responsible for the debacle. By 1766, the

community was in debt once more to the extent of 33,655 ducats.

The solitary practical measure taken was an endeavor to ameliorate the position of the Jews in religious matters, and thus remove one of the causes of emigration. For this, the coöperation of the theological adviser of the government, the *Consultore* Trifone Vrachien, was enlisted. The memorandum which he drew up was a noble résumé of the traditional, but by now antiquated, toleration of the Venetian Republic; but it could not go far enough to remove the real cause of the trouble. In general, the remedies adopted were worse than the disease. In 1742, the *Inquisitori* made a raid upon the funds of the Society for the Redemption of Captives, consisting of sums expressly given for that beneficent purpose. The inevitable result of this was that the Levantine merchants, deprived of the insurance against capture which they had hitherto enjoyed, and seeing the money which they had contributed improperly employed, were shaken in their confidence; and trade generally suffered.

In successive years, the general distress increased. The Ghetto hospice was filled with paupers from the neighboring cities. The communal authorities, usually so generous, were forced to appeal to the government to send them back to their own homes. Such a display of harshness was prevented by the rigorous winter of 1772 and the freezing of the lagoon which accompanied it. There was wide-spread misery, and the houses of the few remaining well-to-do were beset and even invaded by beggars

imploring help. Conditions were not improved by the inhuman action of the *Inquisitori* in 1785, when they struck off the communal balance sheet the small monthly subsidy which it was customary to distribute to the poor, as being unconstitutional. It was found necessary to institute a special fund, known as *Zorké Zibbur* ('Needs of the Community'), to meet the situation.

On the mainland (where a fresh system of taxation for the Jewish communities was introduced, in 1747, to cope with the situation), conditions were similar. In Verona, the regular allowance to the poor rose from an average of seventy lire weekly to three times that amount. The total communal debt amounted to nearly 100,000 lire, so that the authorities forbade any fresh obligations to be contracted. One financial expedient after another was tried to remedy the situation, but without success. In Padua, the Jewish population, which had been about 800 in 1680, was reduced to 500 less than a century later. Their economic condition was deplorable. "It is a body afflicted in so many parts that the evil may be said to be incurable," reported Francesco Morosini in 1759, "unless the public authority applies a timely remedy." In the absence of this, it followed the community of Venice into bankruptcy, a couple of years later. Down to the period of the fall of the Republic, the financial condition of the Jewish population remained desperate.

The community of the capital was worthily represented at this period by Jacob Saraval (1708–1782), the last of the eminent Venetian Rabbis of the Ghetto

period, and a worthy successor of great figures of the previous century. He was a member of an illustrious family of German origin which had been established in Venice since the sixteenth century, and was perhaps a descendant of that Judah Saraval who had been amongst the colleagues of Leone da Modena. He was a man distinguished equally as preacher, poet, philosopher, and polemist, and whose eloquence and versatility were unrivaled in the Italy of his day. His sermons were famous; priests and patricians flocking to the Ghetto to hear them, as in the palmiest days of the previous epoch. He was in communication with Kennicot, the famous English Hebraist, on questions connected with Biblical manuscripts and the masoretic text. He enjoyed considerable reputation as a poet. On one memorable occasion, he traveled in northern Europe, his letters describing the journey being a notable contribution to the geographical literature of the Jews. But above all, he is remembered as a polemist. When the lawyer Benedetti of Ferrara published a fierce attack upon the Jewish people, according to the latest standards, it fell to Saraval to answer it. This he did ably and convincingly in *A Letter to a certain Marquis*, published anonymously in 1775. He was also in all probability the author of the *Saggio sugli Ebrei e sui Greci* (Venice, 1792), published after his death under the pseudonym of Giuseppe Compaggoni: a warm vindication of the Jews as compared with the Greeks. Saraval was for some time Rabbi at Mantua, where it fell to his lot to compose the dirge upon the sixty-six persons

(including his own daughter), killed through the collapse of a house in the Ghetto during the celebration of a wedding in 1776. Contemporary with him was Simha Calimani (d. 1784), a distinguished poet, and author of the morality play, *The Voice of Wisdom*. When the first fruits of the German 'enlightenment' movement reached Italy, he welcomed it wholeheartedly, even though on the south of the Alps it was hardly necessary; and he threw himself into the campaign initiated by Wessely for the reform of the synagogal sermon. Calimani was succeeded by Abraham Jona, who officiated from 1784 to 1815, and is worthy of note as the last Rabbi of the Venetian Ghetto. He was a native of Spalato; and it is significant of the general decadence of the community that it could no longer find a worthy spiritual leader in its own midst. The same downward intellectual tendency is reflected in the decreasing activity of the Hebrew printing press, which was by now moribund. Oppression was slowly doing its work.

The most notable happening in the life of Jacob Saraval was connected with the continued economic crisis in the affairs of the community. In 1737–1738, he was sent on a mission from Venice to England and Holland in the company of his colleague, Jacob Belilios, to beg for assistance.[28] The appeal met with a considerable measure of success. In London,

[28] While in the former place, advantage was taken of their presence for practical purposes; and a certificate from them is still extant certifying that, on the lagoons, turbot was considered a 'clean' fish, and might be eaten according to Jewish law.

where there were settled at this period a number of Venetian Jews, a contribution was raised among the individual members of the Spanish and Portuguese community, and some thousands of pounds sterling were forwarded to Venice. The amount was to be repaid in ten instalments, spread over a number of years. At first, the interest on the loan was forwarded regularly; and provision for the payments due to the Jews of England and Holland was included in the periodical settlements drawn up by the *Inquisitori sopra gli Ebrei*. This punctuality did not, however, continue for long. Letters were received from Venice, where matters were going from bad to worse, pleading a total inability to pay. In the end, instead of refunding the advances already made, the community applied for a further loan. This was courteously but firmly refused. At last, an arrangement of sorts was entered into, and for some years small instalments were sent from Venice with more or less regularity. It was a slow procedure. The generation which had contracted the debt died, and another succeeded it. Political conditions entirely changed. Finally, payments ceased, and the whole question gradually sank into oblivion, with the result that the loan has not been discharged even at the present day.

Notwithstanding the general decadence of the community, a few individuals retained and even augmented their prosperity, thus arousing a good deal of jealousy. They had begun to neglect some of the old restrictions with regard to the possession of real estate. Many of them were corn merchants

on a large scale. With the approval of the government, they had set up manufactories of woolen cloth, for which they received special privileges; and they were encouraged to extend this industry to the *terra ferma*. One wealthy Venetian manufacturer, Anselmo Gentili, employed 140 hands in his spinning mills in the capital, and nearly one thousand throughout the State, without reckoning the boatmen and others who indirectly profited. In Padua, Jews were engaged not only in the silk industry, but also in the manufacture and sale of household and other utensils in wood.

However, at the middle of the century, changed economic theories began to prevail. The protectionist ideals of the Middle Ages were revived, the Jews being considered as foreigners, against whom native industries ought to be protected. The theory was not merely bigoted, but also foolish, and, in some instances, suicidal. Nevertheless, these antiquated conceptions rapidly triumphed. As early as 1698, a reactionary patrician named Marino Cavalli had suggested that the Jews should be forbidden to engage in maritime trade. He was easily refuted. It was not long, however, before similar ideas began to prevail generally. After the middle of the eighteenth century was reached, many of the old repressive regulations were renewed, particularly as regards the wearing of the red hat and other degrading details of the Ghetto system. In the economic sphere, Jews were once more forbidden to engage in agriculture, to possess real estate, to deal in corn and

other necessities of life, or to trespass upon the monopolies of the guilds.

As the century advanced towards its close, the tendency increased throughout Italy. In the Papal States, the *Editto sopra gli Ebrei* of Pope Pius VI (1775), revived every detail of the Ghetto system at its worst, with a barbarity more than medieval, and served as an inspiration to reactionaries everywhere. In Venice, the *condotta* of the Jews was drawing to its close, and discussions were on foot as to the conditions upon which it should be confirmed. For many years past, this had been little more than a formality. However, it now provided the desired opportunity. The revived theories found their champion in the Procurator Andrea Tron, a leader of the new protectionist party, who was backed up by Francesco Donato. In 1776, they proposed publicly that the share of the Jews in Venetian trade and commerce should be restricted, as being a drain upon the resources of the State and unfair to their Christian competitors. On the other side, Girolamo Ascanio Molin called attention to the antiquity of the settlement of the Jews in Venice, and pointed to their utility to the State, to their notable qualities of charity and public spirit, and to the prosperity engendered by the manufactures which they had set up. This powerful advocacy prevented the party of reaction from having its own way immediately; and a commission was appointed to inquire into the question. Finally, however, Tron was able to carry his point.

The *Ricondotta* of 1777 was the most unfavorable

that the Jews had ever known. Economically, it threw the community back by two and a half centuries and more. They were forbidden to engage in any sort of manufacture, to employ Christian hands, or to deal in grain and food stuffs. Any occupation which might entail the slightest competition with Christian citizens was strictly forbidden. They were no longer to hold agencies, to act as brokers, to farm any government monopoly, or to occupy any post whatsoever in connection with the financial administration of the Republic. Save for the wealthy exporters who were engaged in foreign trade, the Jews were henceforth to be restricted entirely to the degrading employment of *strazzaria*, with the exception of those who were engaged in the unproductive occupation of maintaining the loan banks. Manufacture of any sort could be conducted only after receiving from the government a special license, which, it was evident, would be most difficult to obtain. These restrictions applied not only to the capital, but to the whole of the Venetian possessions of the *terra ferma*. As a corollary to the prohibition from dealing in grain and food stuffs, it was forbidden, by the eighty-third clause, for any Jew to live in the villages and rural centers of the Venetian possessions not possessing Ghettos, some of which had hitherto harbored communities of considerable proportions. This provision, according to a contemporary account, was actuated largely by the continual bickerings at Venice between the native Jews and those who had immigrated from other places.

The new regulations were greeted by the Jews with consternation. The community of Verona wrote repeatedly to the Holy Land, begging the local Rabbis to offer up prayers on their behalf, at the western wall of the temple site in Jerusalem and at the tombs of the Patriarchs in Hebron. A public fast was held, "to prepare the hearts of the men of Israel to repentance in time of stress." The consternation was not confined to the Jews. The municipal council presented an appeal to the central authorities, pointing out how the Jewish community had always been engaged in commerce and manufacture, and begging that they should not be disturbed. The little township of Ceneda complained that the new measure would inevitably cut off its supply of grain, which had been furnished by Jews from time immemorial. The *Avvogadori di Comun* at Venice were visibly impressed by these manifestations. They held that the new restrictions had been carried unconstitutionally, as the views of the local authorities in the Venetian dependencies had not been asked upon a matter which affected them so closely. The *Avvogador* Angaran and Carlo Contarini pointed out publicly in the Council the great services which some of the important Jewish firms had rendered to the State. The enforcement of the new regulations was therefore suspended.

For some time, popular passions ran high. Threats were openly made to fire the Ghetto, if the Great Council did not ratify the new arrangements. In the end, the opposition was overcome. The restrictions were confirmed, and put into execution

by a succession of ducal edicts. In Padua, the Jews were driven out of the silk industry, for the introduction and development of which they had been responsible, and the example was followed throughout the Venetian possessions. At Verona, the blow struck at the prosperity of the community was so heavy that in 1778 barely one-sixth of the offerings necessary for the upkeep of the synagogue were forthcoming. In the following year, conditions were still so serious as to necessitate a stern régime of self-discipline in order to avoid giving the government any further pretext of interference. In the other centers, conditions were no doubt similar. Pious Jews imagined that they could find in the last Song of Moses, which was supposed to foretell all things, a detailed reference to the present persecutions and to the inevitable sufferings of the Republic in consequence thereof.

The worst feature of the innovations was the expulsion of the Jews from the minor places of the Venetian territories. This was ruthlessly executed. On October 6th, 1778, instructions were given, 'in the name of order and of good governance', for the Jews of those places in the Paduan territory not possessing Ghettos to be expelled; and the mandate was obeyed at the close of the following year, at Montagnana, Gonselve, Citadella, and Monselice, where the existent diminutive congregations came to an end. In Friuli also the order was carried into execution, the communities of Gonars, Spilimbergo, and especially S. Daniele, being the principal sufferers. Many families were uprooted

and left entirely destitute. An exception was made only in favor of Isaac Luzzatto, who, in response to the appeal made by the general population, was permitted to remain at the last named place to practice medicine. He had the unselfishness to think of his fellow sufferers notwithstanding his own escape, and went to Vienna, armed with letters of introduction, in order to obtain permission from the government for the exiles to settle in Austrian territory. The majority of them thus were enabled to find refuge in Trieste, Gorizia, and the neighborhood. Here the lead in assisting them was taken by Marco Luzzatto, who himself originated from S. Daniele. He enlisted the aid and the sympathy of the community of Trieste for the exiles, and collected money on their behalf from Leghorn, Mantua, and Venice. It is due to this pointless expulsion that Samuel David Luzzatto, the greatest Italian Jewish scholar of recent times, was born under Austrian rule instead of that of Venice, like all of his ancestors for many centuries.

The results of the new protectionist experiment proved its utter folly. Particularly in Padua, the removal of Jewish competition and the consequent closing of looms brought about widespread unemployment, without benefiting any but one or two individuals in the slightest. On June 1st, 1786, when the *condotta* was nearly expired, a commission was appointed to go into the whole question again and to hear the case of the Jews. Its report was favorable. Accordingly, when the *ricondotta* was issued on June 5th, 1788, it was found to be much milder

than that of eleven years before. Thus, the hours of the opening of the Ghetto were protracted, it was permitted to transact business upon minor Church holidays, and, in particular, the employment of Gentiles, though by day only, was formally permitted. In the following years, with the encouragement of the government, the Jews slowly reëstablished themselves to some extent in industrial life, though the damage done during the past decade was not easily remedied.

It is deeply to be regretted that the last years of the Venetian Republic were stained by such a persecution. Over a period of centuries, the Jews had found under the protection of the *Serenissima* a haven of refuge in which, despite intermittent injustice and persecution, their environment contrasted most favorably with the total exclusion, varied by mob violence, which prevailed in the majority of the States of Europe, and in large parts even of Italy. A new spirit was, however, by now abroad in the world. To England and Holland, the Jew had been admitted without restriction, and had stood from the first on a footing of virtual equality with his fellow-beings. In France, the practice of Judaism had been officially permitted, and the worst degradations had been removed. In Austria, the Patent of Toleration of the Emperor Joseph II seemed to herald the dawn of a new day. Even in Germany, certain privileged persons were able to escape the galling restrictions which continued to weigh upon the vast majority. Reports had no doubt penetrated to Italy of the condition of affairs in the newly born United States

of America, where, after the Revolution, a handful of Jews lived, for the first time in the history of the modern world, on terms of perfect equality with the rest of their fellow citizens.[28a] But in Italy there still prevailed that same obscurantist spirit which had spread in it after the Middle Ages had drawn to their close, so that the country which had always figured in Jewish life as a secure refuge had now become almost the last fortress of medieval prejudice.

In 1789, rumors began to penetrate the Italian Ghettos of epoch-making events which were occurring beyond the Alps. A revolution had broken out in France. The moral and legal equality of all men had been proclaimed. Finally, in 1791, even the Jews were emancipated—from the aristocratic Portuguese of Bordeaux and Bayonne down to the uncouth small traders of Alsace. In the spring of 1796, the armies of the French Revolution, under the command of the promising young Corsican general Napoleon Buonaparte, swept across the Alps; and it was soon made manifest to the Jews of Italy that the end of their bondage was at hand. In every place to which the revolutionary armies penetrated, the old government was swept away, the equality of all the inhabitants without distinction was proclaimed, the gates of the Ghetto were broken down, and the Jews were summoned forth to enjoy the rights of citizens and of men.

It is not to be wondered at if individual Jews, resenting the degrading treatment from which their

[28a] This was true so far as the Federal Government was concerned and in nearly all the States.

people was suffering, should have embraced the revolutionary ideas with enthusiasm. Thus in Padua, a certain Dr. Salom, who had received a severe reprimand a couple of years earlier for the same reason, was arrested and sent to Venice in chains in 1793 as a French partisan. Nevertheless, in spite of their inevitable sympathies, the Jews of Venice supported the government of the Doge as long as it lasted. In 1796, on the approach of the enemy, the wealthy firm of Joseph Treves made a very large loan to the government on nominal terms. On March 28th of the following year, the Senate ordered all of the gold and silver plate belonging to the various religious bodies, which was not absolutely necessary for the conduct of public worship, to be given up to meet the exigencies of war, promising to pay interest ultimately upon the sums thus obtained. The Jews were amongst the first to obey this order, taking unstintingly to the mint the ancient silver lamps and trappings for the scrolls of the Law which were the pride of their synagogues, and very valuable. In a formal motion, the Senate publicly recognized its gratitude for this notable display of public spirit.

Such expedients were wholly insufficient to save the Republic from destruction before the blast of new ideas and new conceptions which was sweeping the country. Already, the French had occupied Verona, where the gates of the Ghetto had been torn down and burned in the public square. Thence they had advanced upon the capital. On April 29th, the revolutionary forces entered Padua, where they

were enthusiastically received. All of the former disabilities fell in an instant. A Jew, Michael Salom, was one of the twenty-two members of the new municipality. The Jews entered freely into the various patriotic societies, and, in spite of a certain amount of popular opposition, even into the newly formed Civic Guard.

The way was now open for the French to march on Venice.

Here, the hands of the government were paralyzed with terror. "Tonight we are not safe, even in our beds", cried the last of the Doges, pathetically, as he heard the reports of the cannon reverberating over the lagoon. There was perhaps only one firm step taken by the authorities during the whole of this period. Panic had spread amongst the Jews, who were suspected of being in correspondence with the enemy. Many of them, especially the wealthy merchants, were intending, according to report, to escape from the city before it was attacked, and thus avoid the possibility of sack. Accordingly, on May 5th, a force of between five and six hundred Slavonic mercenaries was sent to surround the Ghetto, in order to prevent any unauthorized departures. Subsequently, they entered into occupation, eight or ten soldiers being billeted in each house.[29] Measures of this sort were, however, insufficient to cope with the terrifying activity of General Buonaparte. On

[29] According to a popular legend still current in Venice, the sack of the Ghetto at this juncture was prevented only by the cabalistical skill of Rabbi Jona, who affixed a specially written amulet to each of the gates.

May 12th, the Great Council met for the last time and agreed to set up a provisional government, based upon a representative system and necessarily revolutionary in character, as the enemy demanded. On May 16th, the first French troops entered into Venice; and on the same day the new democratic government formally assumed power. The rule of the *Serenissima* was at an end.

By the revolutionary constitution, all citizens were declared equal in the sight of the law. The age of servitude was now a thing of the past. Jews thronged into the newly established Civic Guard. Notwithstanding some popular disapproval, three of especial prominence were elected members of the new municipality and sat on the various Committees to which it delegated its powers: Moses Luzzatto, Vita Vivante and Isaac Grego. The new spirit penetrated even to the Ghetto. A provisional régime, headed by the last named Republican stalwart, was installed, under a more democratic appellation. A totally new atmosphere, in imitation of that which was sweeping the outside world, began to prevail. The venerable Abraham Jona became known as the Citizen Rabbi; while the communal factotum was called the Citizen Beadle. All official documents were headed with the magical words: 'Liberty, Equality', and dated according to the new Republican calendar; while communal meetings closed with cheers for 'Fraternity, Democracy, and the Italian Nation.'

On Sunday, July 9th, in accordance with instructions issued a couple of days before by the Com-

mittee of Public Safety, a fresh election for the responsible heads of the community was held. For the first time, universal suffrage was introduced, only minors, beggars, and strangers being allowed no voice; while the system of secret ballot was followed. In order to accentuate the end of all distinctions between the Ghetto and the outside world, those elected were called by the democratic title, Deputies of the Jewish Nation. All this was carried out under the control of the troops quartered in the Ghetto, a detachment of whom was stationed at the door of the principal synagogue, where the poll was held, to keep order. Simultaneously, at a general meeting of the community, there took place a solemn revocation of all the excommunications pronounced in the past in connection with the obsolete system of government, excepting in a few specified cases. All special taxation, excepting that required to defray the internal expenses of the community (the so-called *Zorké Zibbur*) naturally came to an end.

Monday, July 10, 1797 (Messidor 22nd, in the first year of Italian liberty), should have been a day of gloom amongst the Jews. It was the eve of the Fast of Tammuz, anniversary of the breach of the walls of Jerusalem and of manifold other disasters in the history of the race. It was this day which was selected, with a full sense of dramatic values, to bring final deliverance to the Venetian community. By the same decree of the Committee of Public Safety of July 7th which had ordered the fresh election, instructions had been given for the

removal of the Ghetto gates at the beginning of the following week. Late that afternoon, a detachment of the newly enrolled Civic Guard from the neighboring parish of S. Girolamo paraded in the *Ghetto Nuovo*, under the command of Citizen Ferrari, whose zeal and devotion had earned him this singular mark of distinction. The great square was crowded with spectators, including a number of French soldiers who had come to witness the spectacle. Prominent in the crowd were the priests of the parishes of SS. Ermagora e Fortunato and S. Geremia, who set the example of fraternizing with their newly found brethren. A Tree of Liberty had been erected, and around it a delirious mob danced with linked hands. In the meantime, the Ghetto gates were torn off their hinges and dragged into the middle of the square. Here, they were hacked to pieces with axes and publicly burned, Jews and Christians dancing the carmagnole together round the flames.

Meanwhile Citizen Raphael Vivante, a member of the Civic Guard, mounted on top of one of the wells and delivered an impassioned address pointing out the significance of the occasion—the close of the age of persecution and the dawn of a new era of tolerance and brotherhood. The crackling of the flames and the uproar of the mob prevented his speech from being heard by all present; but it was subsequently made available in print. Vivante was followed by Isaac Grego, the foremost among the Jewish members of the new municipality and head of the new communal organization, and by

the Abbate Staddita, a Dalmatian priest, as representing the Church. Meanwhile, in celebration of the event, over three hundred ducats collected from members of the community had been sent to the priests of the parishes of S. Geremia and S. Marcuola, for distribution amongst the poor.

Later in the evening, the local Society for Public Instruction (whose main function was the propagation of revolutionary doctrines) proceeded in full force to the Spanish Synagogue, which was crowded to its utmost capacity. Here they were regaled with an ardent patriotic harangue by their president, the Citizen Massa. The excitement of the day concluded with a reception in the Vivante household. Thus, after an existence of two hundred and eighty-one years and three months, the Venetian Ghetto, as an institution, came to an end.

EPILOGUE

THE dramatic events of that memorable summer's day in 1797 marked an epoch in the vicissitudinous history of the Jewish community of Venice. For the moment, the Ghetto ceased to exist even as a topographical name, the old title, redolent of persecution, being changed to that of *Contrada dell'Unione* ('Street of Union'). The Jews immediately took advantage of the new situation, many of them making arrangements to move out of their former quarter and to establish their businesses and residences where they pleased. When a couple of days later the French held a regatta to celebrate the conquest, the Jews, in their gala boats, took a prominent part, in token of gratitude for their deliverance; and they willingly consigned to the Committee of Public Safety the few pieces of silver left in their synagogues after the requisition of a few weeks before. The only one of the old burdens which still continued—and that by force of usage rather than anything else—was the maintenance of the three loan banks for the benefit of the poor. Already, apparently, at the beginning of the revolutionary movement it was proposed to do away with these, the Jews being asked as a special favor to continue them until fresh arrangements could be made. On October 25th, 1797, the community offered to make over to the government, the capital, amounting to some 200,000 ducats, upon condition that one half of the staff of the new public

establishment which was to be opened should be composed of those Jews now thrown out of employment. The political situation apparently prevented anything further from being done at this time. However, excepting in this respect, the Jews now enjoyed a perfect equality.

The example of Venice was rapidly followed elsewhere in the old Venetian dominions. In Padua, an order was issued on August 28th, empowering the Jews to live wherever they pleased, and renaming the old Ghetto by the significant title of *Via Libera.* A fortnight later, the gates were removed. At Verona, similar steps had already been taken some time before.

However, this foretaste of complete liberty was short. A little later in the same year. the French concluded the infamous treaty of Campoformio, by which the majority of the territories of the Republic of Venice were tossed as a sop to Austria. In January, 1798, the Imperial troops entered these ingloriously acquired possessions, and a period of reaction set in. The Ghetto system was not indeed restored, nor were any of the degrading measures associated with it reënacted. Nevertheless, the Jews immediately lost their new civil rights, and some of the old restrictions again came into vigor. Above all, the general atmosphere changed. The obscurantist party gained the upper hand. The Jews were generally suspected of favoring the revolutionary régime. Their protestations of loyalty, expressed by services in the synagogues for the welfare of their new rulers, were insufficient to

placate the general prejudice. Thus, both in Padua and in Verona, the entrance of the Austrian forces was accompanied by a rise in the popular feeling against the Jews, and the delivery of an assault against the Jewish quarter by an angry reactionary mob. A similar spirit prevailed at Venice. The authorities, though hardly pro-Jewish, were determined to fulfill the duties of government, and took energetic measures to restore order. At Verona, however, the atmosphere remained unpleasant for a long period, so that as late as August, 1799, a further proclamation was deemed necessary forbidding any molestation of the Jews.

This régime lasted for just nine years, when, in consequence of Napoleon's overwhelming victory at Austerlitz, the Veneto was added to the new Kingdom of Italy. With the entrance of French troops into Venice on January 19th, 1806, the perfect equality of the revolutionary era was restored. This was at last carried to its logical conclusion by the closing of the Ghetto banks, the administration of the communal *Monte di Pietà* which was to replace them being put up at public auction. The remaining capital, together with the sums realized by the sale of the various properties, amounted to some 13,000 ducats. The Jewish community presented this sum to the municipality to be devoted to charitable purposes, the gift being accepted with a public expression of gratitude. Thus the last vestige of the medieval regime passed away, after an existence of many centuries. The Jews showed generously their appreciation of their new status. When the

Viceroy, Eugene de Beauharnais, came to Venice, a few months after the reoccupation, one of the great features in the public celebrations in his honor was the launching of a ship by the firm of Vivante. In the following year, the Emperor Napoleon himself arrived; and in the procession of decorated boats which went to greet him, were those belonging to the houses of Treves, Vivante, and Malta. In 1811, a statue of the Emperor was inaugurated on the *Piazzetta* in front of the Doge's palace. The official discourse on this occasion was delivered by a Treves. It was at this period that Giuseppe Treves dei Bonfili, the first Italian Jew to be ennobled, received the title of Baron in honor of his great services to the city and to the State. In 1806, Napoleon summoned in Paris the Great Sanhedrin, which was to settle once for all the Jewish problem in his dominions. In this, the Jews of Italy were represented by the side of those of the rest of the Empire. The new Department of the Adriatic sent Aaron Lattes, Abraham Tedesco, and Rabbi Jacob Emanuel Cracovia, all of Venice; while Verona was represented by Israel Coen, who was reported to have received a record number of votes. The new régime which this inaugurated did not however last for long. The fall of Napoleon saw the Veneto restored to Austria, and the beginning of a fresh era of repression.

The Jews suffered from this change more than their neighbors. It is true that the Ghetto system of the past, and all that was associated with it, was never restored. Nevertheless, besides having to

submit with their fellow citizens to an alien rule, they lost the civil rights which they had enjoyed during the past decade. Their desire to prove their fitness for this led to one important result. It was considered necessary to replace the old style Rabbi by persons who had received a modern training, and were fully fitted to take their place as representatives of the community in its dealings with the outside world. Accordingly, there was established at Padua in 1829 the famous *Istituto Rabbinico Lombardo-Veneto*, the prototype of all modern Jewish Theological Seminaries, and the forerunner of the present-day *Collegio Rabbinico Italiano* of Florence. At its head was appointed Samuel David Luzzatto, of Trieste, whose family had been forced to leave the Venetian territories in consequence of the persecutory measures of half a century before: a man in whom the vast attainments and penetrating intellect of the Italian Rabbis of previous generations seemed to be revived, and who was recognized as one of the very foremost scholars in his own subjects in the world.[30] Thus over a short period Padua once again became a great center of Hebraic studies and the Mecca of Jewish students from all over Europe, as it had been four centuries before.

The hopes aroused by this foundation were

[30] The former subjection of Padua to Venice had by now ended. This volume is not therefore the place to enter into a fuller account of the life and work of this remarkable personality. For similar reasons it is impossible to make more than a passing mention of Luigi Luzzatti (1841–1927), Prime Minister of Italy in 1910—incomparably the most illustrious citizen of Venice in recent times.

however short-lived; and the Jews continued to be subjected to their triple disabilities: as members of a despised faith, as human beings suffering from misgovernment, and as Italians placed under an alien rule. The consequences were inevitable. In 1848, there took place that last heroic outburst in Venetian history which set the whole world admiring, and which revived for a short space the glorious traditions of the *Serenissima*. When the news of the January Revolution at Vienna reached the city, the yoke of Austrian rule was thrown off with a superhuman effort and a Republic was proclaimed. It was a premature step, foredoomed to failure. Nevertheless, the new democracy continued to exist for a whole year, and it capitulated only after a heroic defence, at the close of a siege which had lasted for three months.

The moving spirit in the Provisional Government was Daniel Manin, who bore the same surname as the last Doge. The coincidence was however purely accidental. Manin did not belong to an old patrician family. On the paternal side, he was of Jewish blood. His father was the son of a converted Veronese couple, Samuel and Allegra Medina, who had assumed the surname of Manin in honor of their sponsor at baptism.[31] There are few figures in the whole of nineteenth century history so pure and so noble as that of this last Venetian hero, whose

[31] The current account that Manin was descended from the Marrano family of Fonseca is erroneous, being based upon a false identification of his father with another Pietro Manin, likewise a convert from Judaism.

ancestors had come to shelter under the lion of S. Marco to escape from foreign oppression. Though he himself did not preserve any official connection with the Jewish community, the change of government meant for it the momentary removal of all the galling restrictions which had been renewed under Austrian rule. On March 29th, 1848, the perfect equality of all citizens was declared. The special and degrading form of Jewish oath was removed by a decree of twelve months later; while the attempt of the Patriarch to obtain the regularization of the clandestine baptism of converts was defeated by the patriotic priest, Niccolò Tommaseo, who had become Minister of Public Worship.

It was no wonder that the Jews joined enthusiastically in the revolutionary movement. In the National Guard, which fought bravely for the defence of the city, there were a dozen Jewish officers, with privates in proportion. Leone Pincherle, who had played a prominent part in the events of the past heroic days, was Minister of Agriculture and Commerce in the Provisional Government; while Isaac Pesaro Maurogonato was Minister of Finance. Among the members of the National Assembly were the two Rabbis of the community, Abraham Lattes and Samuel Olper. The latter, a fiery orator, is reported to have declared, on the establishment of the democratic government, that henceforth there was no distinction between Jews and Catholics—all, without exception, were now Italians. He was responsible for the introduction into the Assembly of one of the most dramatic motions in favor of

liberty, and was entrusted by the government with several delicate diplomatic missions. Lattes, his colleague, was similarly among the foremost inspirers of the defence, especially amongst his own community, whom he urged to contribute to the utmost of their means to the patriotic funds and to enroll themselves in the National Guard, notwithstanding the breach of the Sabbath and holydays which might be involved. In particular, he distinguished himself by his devotion and self-sacrifice during the outbreak of cholera which accompanied the siege. Other noteworthy figures were Abraham Errera, Cesare della Vida, Angelo Levi, and Baron Giacomo Treves, who was elected to the Assembly by a record number of votes, after Manin himself and Tommaseo. Even the Ghetto suffered for the Revolutionary cause during the course of the bombardment, the Spanish synagogue being struck on August 17th, 1849, by a shell, which fortunately did not explode.[32] The 'Forty', who were exiled from the city with Manin for their share in the Revolution, included a number of members of the race to which he traced his origin. Never, perhaps, have Jews been identified with any similar patriotic movement to quite the same extent.

The struggle, and the self-sacrifice, seemed all in vain. However, in 1866 the hated Austrian rule was at last overthrown, and Venice was united to the

[32] It was during the Friday evening service that the episode took place, the shell striking the marble steps leading up to the Ark, at a point where an inscription commemorating the event may still be read. The anniversary is still celebrated annually as *Il Venerdì della Bomba.*

Kingdom of Italy. By a decree of August 4th, all citizens of the newly acquired possessions were declared equal in the sight of the law; and the differentiatory history of the Jews of Venice came to an end. In the height of nineteenth century enthusiasm for religious equality, even the title of 'community' had been considered too discriminatory; with the result that the affairs of the synagogues and of the other religious institutions are now administered by a Fraternity (*Fraterna Generale di Culto e Beneficenza*), instituted after the French occupation in 1806. It is a drastic change from the old days, when the 'Holy Congregation of Venice' was famed and respected in every place in which Jews dwelt. Of the little group of communities of which it was formerly the center, those of Padua and Verona still function regularly, while the rest are in more or less complete decadence.

At the present day, the community of Venice has fallen far from its ancient glories. The Jewish population of the city, nearly five thousand at its prime, is reduced to less than half that number. Very few descendants of the original inhabitants are left in the Ghetto, which is now occupied almost exclusively by Christian families. Of the ancient synagogues, formerly crowded for worship three times each day, two have entirely disappeared, while others are no longer open for regular service even on the greatest solemnities of the year. Nevertheless, the outward setting of the old Jewish life is still present. From the Fondamenta della Pescaria, facing the Canal, one may enter under the narrow

gateway, still provided with the hinges upon which the massive gate formerly hung, into the Ghetto. This, despite the ravages of fire, stands today much as it did three hundred years ago. The main thoroughfare, with the network of alleys behind it, still presents the same general appearance as on that memorable day, when the gates were torn from their hinges and the institution came to an end. The more important of the old synagogues, in which so many personalities of note in Jewish life once worshiped, may yet be admired. The ancient buildings are in many cases unaltered. There are few places in Europe in which the architectural background of the Jewish life that is past is so perfectly preserved. It does not need much imagination to people these narrow courts with the red hatted inhabitants of the Ghetto period, intensely and delightfully human, living, loving, learning, and quarreling. One can still picture the three banks in the *Ghetto Nuovo*—the red, the yellow, and the green—surrounded by a seething mob of humanity, anxious to borrow or to lend. A little aloof from the rest stand turbaned merchants from the Levant, and courtly refugees from Spain and Portugal, accompanied by brightly adorned women folk, with serving wenches to hold up their long and elaborate trains. And amongst them all, deep in conversation with a visiting grandee about some abstruse point of scholarship, or brooding over his gaming losses of the previous night, wanders the obsequious figure of Rabbi Leone da Modena, their pride and their disgrace. The modern world can provide examples of com-

munities greater, wealthier, and perhaps even more learned by far. In Jewishness, in picturesqueness, and in warm humanity there is, however, none today which can vie with that of Venice at its prime.

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Plan of Venice Ghetto

(For translation of the titles see reverse side)

TRANSLATION

NOTABLE EDIFICES

P.—Portals of the Ghetto
I. 'Ponentine' Talmud Torah
II. Spanish Synagogue, or *Schola*
III. Levantine Synagogue
IV. 'Schola Luzzatto'
V. Ghetto Inn (1792)
VI. Academy of Leone da Modena
VII. Academy of J. H. Vivante
VIII. 'Schola Mesullamim'
IX. Italian Synagogue
X. Academy of the 'Schola Canton'
XI. 'Schola Canton'
XII. Association of the Jewish Poor
XIII. Great Synagogue (German rite)
XIV. 'Schola Coanim'
XV. The 'Red' Bank
XVI. Schola Luzzatto (original site)
O.—Public Wells

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